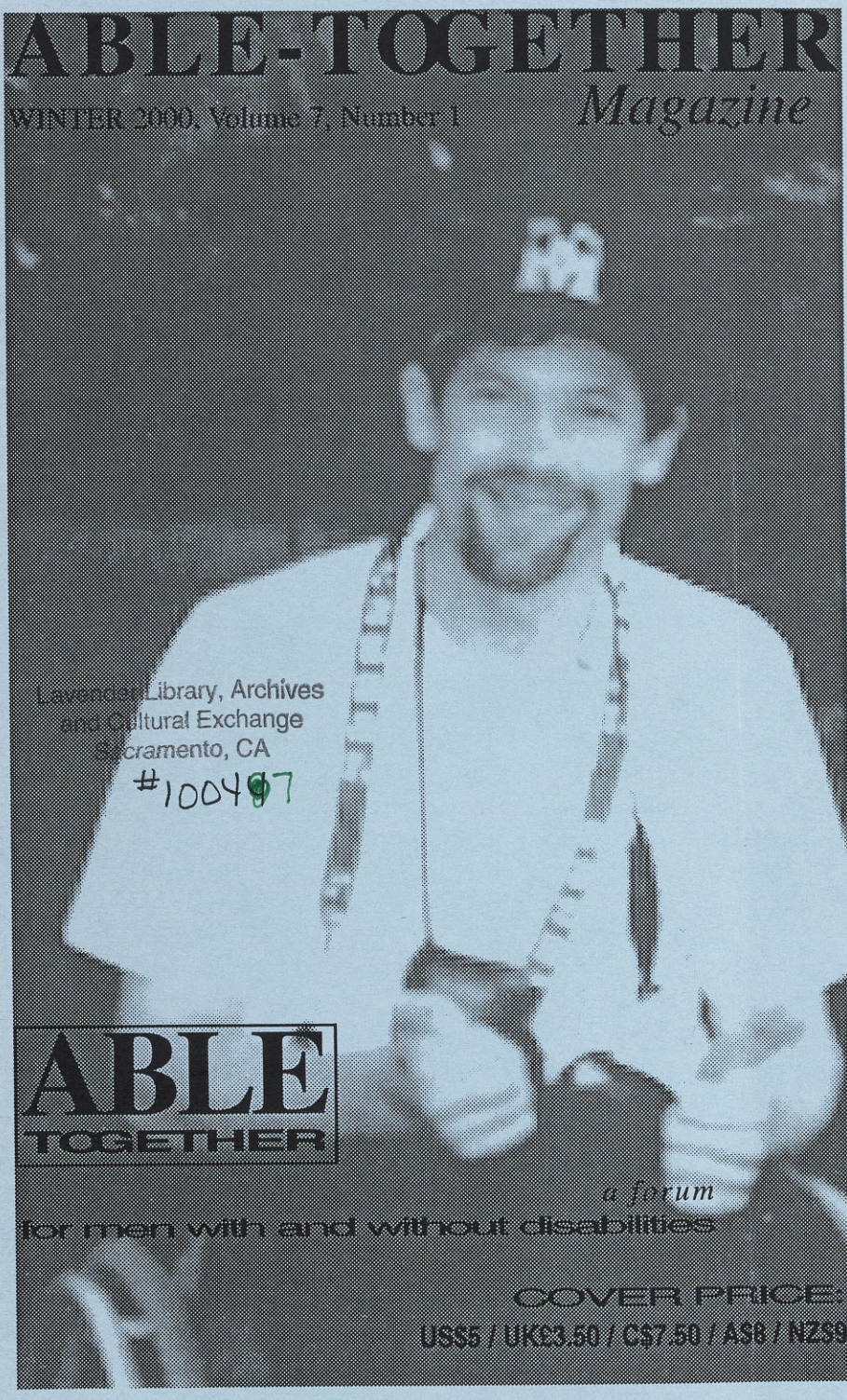
ABLE-TOGETHER *Magazine*

WINTER 2000, Volume 7, Number 1



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ABLE TOGETHER

a forum
for men with and without disabilities

COVER PRICE:
US$5 / UK£3.50 / C$7.50 / A$8 / NZ$9

BULLETIN BOARD

Two ABLE-TOGETHER yellow flyers are stapled into this issue of the magazine: please pull them out and keep to pass on to someone who might like to know about A-T!

!!A-T MAGAZINE IS AVAILABLE ON MAC DISKETTE FOR BLIND/VISUALLY-IMPAIRED READERS!!

Please get in touch with A-T if you want to receive this issue of the magazine on floppy disk

$$ HELP WANTED $$

A-T, Inc. is looking for a self-motivating grantwriter to obtain the funding we need to extend the organization's services. S/he will research sources of funds and work with the executive director in collecting data for writing grants. Grantwriter's remuneration will be written into the grant(s) and will be contingent upon receipt of grant(s). Good resume-building opportunity. Call Peter Geiger on # 415 522 9091

SEXUALITY BOOKLET

Innovative booklet, written for and by spinal cord injured gay bisexual men, directed at both the newly- and the not-so-newly injured.

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specify gay men's booklet

Order From: Spinal Injuries Association, 76 St. James's Lane
London N10 3DF, UK, ph: 011 44 [0]181-444-2121

Cover photograph: see feature, page 20

BOARD UPDATE
FROM THE PRESIDENT

The board of *ABLE-TOGETHER, Inc.* held its annual meeting on December 12th.

A new board was elected. A-T thanks longtime outgoing board members Steven Sklar, Mike Maurillo and Michael Perreault, and welcomes new board members Chris Hewitt and Bret Throckmorton, and the return of Peter Geiger.

The meeting voted to organize policy-implementing subcommittees of the board, each with responsibility for specific program areas.

A $2,500 grant has been received from Horizons Foundation, the SF Bay Area LGBT funding organization, for our Cafe A-T 2000 Program, which will be spearheaded by Chris Hewitt (see page 29).

Following the success of the August 1999 pilot Cafe A-T London, a local british A-T affiliate has been formed; the board voted to grant Able-Together UK an amount of $100 toward their office expenses for staging five Cafe A-T London meetings this year (see page 30).

The board voted thanks to outgoing A-T Magazine editor Bob Guter who donated funds for the registration of a new web domain, **www.abletogether.com** Blaine Waterman and Peter Geiger hope to furnish the new site early in 2000.

The meeting reviewed developments on *Disgaytalk,* A-T's online discussion group, and incoming A-T Magazine editor Bret Throckmorton's plans for a more accessible publication in 2000.

The Buddy Program continues to be offered on a "request" basis to men wanting to meet someone with a similar disability.

—Blaine Waterman

ABLE TOGETHER

WINTER 2000, Volume 7, Number 1

EDITOR

Bret Throckmorton
bthrockm@hotmail.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Geiger
ptrgeiger@aol.com

Stuart Winstone

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Blaine Waterman
President

Chris Hewitt
Vice-President

Peter Geiger
Secretary and *Treasurer*

Bret Throckmorton

Advisory Board
John Killacky
Lynn Luckow
Tom Metz

ABLE-TOGETHER
P. O. Box 460053
San Francisco
CA 94146 USA

VOICE MAIL/US: 415 522 9091
VOICE MAIL/UK: 01453 832782
EMAIL: ABLTOGETHR@aol.com
INTERNET:
http://www.well.com/~blaine/abletog.html

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ABLE TOGETHER

from the EDITOR

WELCOME TO THE MILLENNIUM!

Please return all chairs and trays to the locked, upright position and prepare for landing.

If you're reading this, then obviously the world has not come to a screeching halt due to Y2K non-compliance. Whew—what a relief. We may not be living the 21st century lifestyle we thought we'd be in based on all those "Jetson" cartoons, but we're still here. (And since I'm writing this well in advance of the clock striking midnight on New Year's Eve, I have no way of knowing what may happen. Perhaps the Giant Silver Ball in Times Square will get stuck again, then break off and fall to the street, rolling through and terrorizing all the partiers... How's THAT for a Rockin' New Year, Dick Clark?)

With the new century has come a new Editor—YIKES!!! I hope I can do as good a job as past editors Peter Geiger (writing as Peter Hegedus), Mike Maurillo and Bob Guter. And a big nod of thanks for their efforts in keeping the magazine going.

I thought I'd like to try something a bit different for the magazine. One of our readers had commented that he would read the ads or articles but not know much about the specific disabilities and would like more information to become more familiar with the variety of disabilities mentioned in the pages of Able-Together.

So—we're going to start focusing on individual disabilities each issue; hopefully we can provide more information and get a better understanding of the challenges individuals face daily to try and have as "normal" a life as possible. I'll start it off in this issue writing about *my hidden disability* (almost sounds like a romance novel title).

To celebrate the millennium and five glorious years of Able-Together Magazine we will be re-printing some of the best articles from past issues. This

issue will feature a re-print of Peter Geiger's final editor's column (Summer 1998 A-T), which has recently been published in "New Mobility."

And Stuart Winstone, a magazine subscriber from the UK, writes of his trip to the States and of meeting some of his A-T penpals.

Once I get full access to the internet (thank you to those of you who donate your old computers to A-T), I'll be e-mailing some of the people running ads in our magazine to find out how things are going with them and to ask for articles going more in depth on their disability as well. You have been warned.

Of course, anybody who would like to whip up an article, a poem, a thought or some art work to contribute would be most welcome and greatly appreciated. Remember—Able Together is your group and your magazine, and we'd like to hear from you.

Anybody who would like to get in touch with me with ideas, comments, critiques, or suggestions, please do. You can email me at **bthrockm@hotmail.com** or write me at **Able-Together Magazine, POB 460053, San Francisco, CA 94146**. I look forward to hearing from any and all of you.

THANKS FOR READING.

—Bret Throckmorton

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What's in a disability? **Bret Throckmorton** invites your understanding

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Peter Geiger says you are a hero

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Five years after sustaining his spinal injury a hearing-impaired British man travels across the US: **Stuart Winstone** won't just sit pretty

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ABLE-TOGETHER, Inc.

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YOU are wanted at **Cafe A-T 2000 in San Francisco & London**

The Mysterious Case Of The Hidden Disability

Bret Throckmorton looks nondisabled, but...

COOL TITLE, HUH? Sort of conjures up visuals of haunted castles, flashes of lightning and strange hands reaching out from secret passages behind ze bookkase. ("PUT ZE KENDLE BECK!!") I think I know someone who is a little too crazy for old horror and mystery movies.

I wish my disability could be that exciting.

Truth to tell, my disability is frustrating—very frustrating. I was trying to come up with a positive spin on it, yet all I could think was I have a lot of stories should I ever become a stand up comedian.

Here I go—I'm going to write about my disability and lay myself, naked and exposed, in your hands (ICK!)

I have (dramatic flourish on the pipe organ) BACK PROBLEMS. Back problems—sounds like a standard sit-com schtick where the lazy neighbor or bone-idle uncle always gets out of work by claiming "back problems," while the rest of the cast and the viewing audience know they just want to stay home watching soap operas and riffling through five pound boxes of "Sees" candies.

I'm not quite as up on the medical terminology and lingo as I'd like to be to describe my condition—I'm not even sure if there is one medical term for it. (If there was, I'm sure Springer would've done a show on people with this disabilty and the cousins they're having sex with). "Sciatica" and "Schmorl's Nodes" are two of the diagnoses.

I have several "problem" conditions that total up to a disability. I have a spare and misshappen vertebra at the base of my spine that is fused on one side and free floating on the other. The vertebra is also twice as large on one side. With the spare vertebra is a spare disc which has been deteriorating merrily away for years. Several discs above that one are herniated or deteriorating. There are two discs that bulge out and hit the nerves to my legs, and

can affect my walking or sitting. My legs are always tingling, and often feel like they're asleep. When I'm fatigued or am having a particularly bad time with my back, the muscles in my legs throb so they feel like they'll burst out of my skin. I also have other muscle and nerve damage in my back and legs.

Some of the frustration comes from having to give up or adapt things I like to do. Ten years ago I had to get rid of my mountain bike because bicycle riding put too much strain on my back, so there went my transportation to work and my weekend rides through Golden Gate Park. I had to stop bowling and dancing for the same reasons—too much strain, too much jarring. I have to change positions constantly while sitting and can't sit or stand for extended lengths of time. Riding the bus can be a nightmare even when one is fully functioning, and especially so when the ride can throw your back out.

I've had quite a few embarassing moments when my back has gone out unexpectedly (actually, my back seems to go out more often these days than I do). One time it went out in the middle of a dance routine when I was working as a male stripper in Columbus, Ohio (at a straight bar for "ladies night"). I was on stage, shaking my money maker, when there was a sudden sharp stab of pain and I had to grab the railing for support. Thank God it wasn't during my roller skate strip routine (done to Cher's "Hell On Wheels")—I could have lost control and gone careening out into the parking lot. ("Why, what an UNUSUAL hood ornament. And so lifelike!") I managed to finish the routine (though quite lamely and to lukewarm applause), my boyfriend at the time (who was also in the strip review) helped me gather up my clothes and tips and got me dressed and we slooooooooowly got out to my car. I drove home and sat in the driveway honking the car horn until my Aunt Jackie came out to help me inside. That was an odd one to explain—"What happened????" "Well, I was putting my goodies in the display window going for that big tip and..." Or, perhaps, "I was doing fine until some crazy lady started tipping with silver dollars, the weight just did me in."

Another time I was at one of my favorite neighborhood bars, hanging out with some friends and enjoying the music and the ambience that only a two-for-one happy hour can bring. One of my friends, on his return trek from the bathroom, came up behind me and poked me in the sides. I, being a responsible adult who is extremely ticklish, jumped and—there it went

again. My back was out, and they had to lay me across a slew of barstools while someone called a cab to get me home.

Now, these couple of stories happened fairly early in the start of my disability. Over the years, as it progressed and got worse, I became more prone to my back going out. I've strained it carrying laundry, vacuuming, throwing up while sick with the flu, and even sitting on the toilet; since I also have Irritable Bowel Syndrome, that's happened more times than I'd care to count (or than you'd care to hear about). Should I tell you about the times my back has gone out while sitting on the toilet, falling to the floor (rebounding off the bathtub in the process) in intense pain, unable to stand, laying in a pool of urine and beating my fists on the floor like Chucky Heston at the end of "Planet of the Apes" ("You did it...You finally did it...DAMN YOU ALL TO HELLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL!!!!!")

Nah—I think I'll let those go. I'll save them for some cold winter night in front of the fireplace.

I think the worst time was one that happened just a year or so ago. I was dating this really cute, nice guy—medium height, slim build, smile to die for. He had walked back to my apartment with me and we were standing in front of my door, kissing goodnight. He had his arms around my neck and suddenly (I'd like to think he was overcome by the passion of my kisses) he kind of leapt up and wrapped his legs around my hips and—SNAP!!!!!! Instant pain, sharp intake of breath and collapse to the floor. After I convinced him this was NOT a drill but an actual emergency, he had to help me in and get me undressed and in bed (which can be quite fun as roleplay but not so sexy in real life).

Here it was—the point of no return. He sat on the edge of my bed, afraid to touch me for fear of causing pain. I'm chewing pain killers and muscle relaxers like they were Gummi Bears, telling him about my disability. This was our third or fourth date and the first time he had been in my apartment, and as I talked he played with the various physical therapy items I have hanging on the head and foot boards—two back braces (a snug one for daytime, a looser one for sleep), a traction belt, canes, knee brace, towels rolled round a belt for disc traction, therabands for leg exercises, straps for the same, and two different rubber balls on dowel rods to thump or roll out pain areas. There's also a lumbar roll kept nearby to work out on the floor, special pillows on the chairs, and a pile of eight pillows on the bed—

not for that "harem" effect but to use to support my legs and back and keep from tossing and turning in bed too much. Nor are the array of pill bottles on the night stand a decorator accent (The Judy Garland Room at FantaSuites????)

So—we talked. And talked. And we talked some more. I didn't tell him about having to get up three to four hours early to assess my body and pain level and still have time enough to do my physical therapy and take pain killers if needed before getting ready for work. I didn't tell him about some of the other problems, like the need to urinate frequently or the difficulty maintaining an erection.

Maintaining an erection—how do you explain to someone that yes, you ARE turned on and yes, you DO think he's sexy and YES, this is GREAT, when your "little soldier" isn't exactly supporting your statements. The male ego is a fragile thing, and a limp dick can be taken as an insult to his desirability. Though the Spirit may be Willing, the Flesh is Limp. An awkward discussion to have with your physiscian, let alone with someone you care about, are falling for, and hoping to have more than one night of disappointing sex: "So, honey, feeling frisky tonight?" "Well, let's see—my pain level is about a four out of ten, my frisky meter is hanging in there at a seven, so all systems indicate a good shot at completing the sex act. Get the back brace, cane, ointments and unguents, lube and condoms, you can choose which cock ring I should wear, get the dildos so I can finish the job I can't complete, strap me in and cinch me up and lets HAVE AT IT…uh-oh, too late. DAMN damn damn…" Even masturbation (also known by the more clinical term "shaking the bad boys out of school") is a no guarantee situation—it's depressing when even your hand falls asleep…

And peeing—the pressure on my back makes me feel like I have to pee all the time—but I'll be standing at a urinal trying my damndest to pee yet nothing happens, except for the other guys in there thinking I'm trying to get a little action ("Yes, that is impressive, but honestly I'm just trying to pee…")

I didn't tell him about the peeing and erection problems, just the pain and frustration and limitiations, and that was the last I saw of him. Oh, we played phone tag for a couple of weeks, I'd leave messages on his machine and occasionally he would return my call, but there was always something coming up so that we couldn't get together. After he had used the same excuse several times (I mean, how many times can your mother die????) I bought

a vowel and solved the puzzle—the relationship was over before it really began, and I went on feeling like damaged goods on the knock-down counter at Walgreens.

I can't help but wonder at times—are relationships difficult because I feel like less of a person and don't want to end up being a burden on someone I love, or is it the other guy being leery about being with someone who may (or may not) end up needing total assistance for even simple things like toileting and bathing, or could it be that my grandmother was right and I am the spawn of Satan?

November 1997—my back has gone out BIG TIME, I can barely walk but manage a fairly respectable two mile an hour creeping motion with the use of my cane and a tightly cinched back brace. I'm on a disability from work (my supervisor Sharron, who is a nurse and an understanding psychotic bitch from hell—we called her "Nurse Feratu") is calling me at home asking what drugs I'm taking. I'm taking high dosage pain killers and forgetting if I'm eating or not, and doing lots of physical therapy.

A new symptom has popped up. When I think I'm all done and standing up from the toilet, a little jet of urine shoots out. Fortunately, the bathtub is right across from the toilet, so no major puddles to mop up. One day while I'm inching along the hallway to the kitchen, I realize I'm peeing down my leg while I'm walking. Oh, well, just marking my territory—can scootching my butt 'cross the carpet be far behind?

A few days later I'm sitting in my doctors office, trying not to cry while he pokes and prods and tests my range of motion and pain level. I tell him about the urine dribbling situation, he wrinkles his brow and leaves the office. When he comes back he helps me get dressed and says he's called and set up an appointment in ten minutes with a back specialist who is two flights up. I get to the appointment and the specialist starts more poking, prodding and testing. After a few minutes he asks me who is taking care of me at home. I tell him I live alone, and he says I should be hospitalized, and I'll need surgery to remove parts of several discs. He says at least one of the discs is bulging into the cauda equina—a bundle of nerves in the lower spinal column somewhat resembling a horse's tail. The upshot of this little gem of information is if the discs keep bulging I'll start losing all bladder control.

He makes several calls to my doctor and to admissions and tells me to go check in, then they'll do more

x-rays and an MRI to pinpoint what needs to be removed, then surgery the next morning. At admissions I find out that my HMO is refusing to let me have the tests and surgery at Davies Medical (where my doctor is located), and if I need surgery I'll have to go cross town to Saint Mary's. My doctor is livid, but makes some calls and gets the MRI technician at Saint Mary's to agree to wait for me (it's after 5pm by this point). I don't have a car so I have to cab it. An hour or so later I'm at Saint Mary's, trying not to get too panicky while in the claustrophobic confines of the MRI machine. I'm in there for almost two hours while they do the imaging, then wait for the preliminary readings. The technician phones the report to the surgeon, I get a prescription for pre-med drugs to take before I go to bed, and off in another cab to the one pharmacy open at that hour that accepts my HMO insurance.

I am a bundle of nerves (damaged ones at that) by now. For years Back and Spine Specialists have been cautioning me about having back surgery, since there is a risk the surgery could end up doing more damage, possibly even causing paralysis. Surgery, they said, should be the last ditch effort when everything else has failed. So now, I have no other options. I call my friend David to see if he can take me to the hospital in the morning.

I check in at Saint Mary's and am put in a pre-op room to get undressed and gowned. David helps me and the nurse tells me David should take my wallet, keys, checkbook, etc., home with him since I won't need them and thefts at hospitals are possible. David puts a five dollar bill in the pocket of my jeans and hangs out with me a bit while I wait for surgery. (And we played around a bit while waiting—hospital fantasy. There's something a bit erotic laying in a hospital bed in a clean, sterile environment, with a guy from Arkansas with a furry chest and nipples screaming for attention. Just having one last minor though-it-may-be fling before "going under the knife," while my equipment is still in sort of working order.). The nurse pops in (and luckily I had just stopped fondling David's chest) to say I'll be taken to surgery shortly and gives me a sedative, while David tactfully rearranges himself.

David has to leave and takes most of my personal belongings with him, saying goodbye in that sexy Arkansas drawl. I'm sedated, surfing the three tv channels available with the remote, trying desperately not to think of becoming paralyzed through a surgeon's slip with the scalpel. The doctor has come in with the x-rays

and MRIs to show me which discs are going to be operated on and how much will be removed. He's a jolly bear of a doctor so I feel a little more comforted, almost as if Santa had come to do the operation and promised I could choose any toy (or elf?) I want afterwards.

More time passes. It's past noon, I've been laying there for five hours (I'm bored and sedated and tired—isn't anyone going to shave my crotch? I don't need it done for back surgery but it would help pass the time). Since I was running around last night having tests and getting meds I wasn't able to eat—and not allowed to eat this morning because of the surgery, so I'm starving. Jolly Bear Doctor comes in and says there is a problem—my HMO, who authorized Jolly Bear to read the test results and determine the need for surgery, has authorized the surgery but WILL NOT authorize him to perform the operation. The doctor they will allow to do the surgery is on vacation and unavailable for at least two weeks.

Jolly Bear calls my doctor, they both start calling my HMO, I call my HMO and yell at the poor sap that answers the call. "You have to understand this—I'm laying here naked 'cept for a hospital gown, I have no money and no way home and no keys to get in even if I get home so what the fuck do you mean you won't authorize the surgeon? Were your parents first cousins?"

I try calling David and get his answering machine. "David—it's Bret. I'm being discharged 'cause the numbnuts at my HMO won't authorize the surgeon. Please come get me and bring my keys." (To be honest, the message was more like "Davidsobsobsob it'sBretsobgasp sob the nuhuhuhumnutsatsob…) I start calling everyone whose phone number I can remember to try and get out of there. A few ex-boyfriends were surprised to hear from me and how nice it was to talk, but can't come get me. I'm at the point where I'm begging a friend who works at Kaiser to ask his boss if he could run an emergency errand of mercy when a nurse pops in to say, "There's a David on the line for you…" RELIEF! I start crying when David says he's on his way. I thought I was going to have to start dialing numbers at random and promise favors I may not be able to fulfill just for a ride.

After that fiasco, my doctor got me set up with a neurosurgeon friend of his. He ran the same poke prod and whimper tests, plus some new ones I'd only heard rumors of, and decided to put me on a more agressive round of physical therapy. He also told me something sobering—according to him, a third of

the people who have back surgery do feel better, a third feel little or no improvement, and a third feel worse—the odds are stacked for the house, not for the gambler.

Here it is—two years later, still living with chronic low-level back pain, still going to bed at night hoping I'll wake up and at least be able to get out of bed, still listening to concerned friends saying, "Is your back okay? You're walking funnier than usual."

A year ago I took myself off the painkillers and muscle relaxers, deciding I'd rather be in pain and alert than dozing off on the bus and waking up to find a strangers hand on my crotch (I already have too many people on my Christmas card list). I also got to the point where I was so doped up I couldn't remember if I had eaten that day or not and would be wandering around my kitchen, peering in the sink and rummaging through the cupboards trying to jog my memory. I keep a supply of pain killers handy, though, for those days when the physical therapy just is NOT relieving the pain. I keep an extra stash handy for when the day may come that the pain is just too much to take anymore and I want to exit gracefully (I read the book.) I hope that day may never come, but just in case…
It is the uncertainty that gets to me the most. I can't help but think that if my back does finally go for good and I'm wheelchair bound I'm screwed—my apartment and my building are not handicapped accesible and the rents are so high I'd never be able to find a new place. Yet at times I do wish that it would just happen—the discs and spine just do the final snap and have it done with.

Sometimes I get maudlin for the things I used to do—when I was able to sweep my boyfriend up in my arms and carry him off to the bedroom like Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara; when I could go dancing all night long and then drive to Seal Rock and walk along the beach at 3 am; when I could help friends move into new apartments; when I could go to sleep cuddled up next to someone without worrying about wetting the bed.

Then again—there is an up side to my disability. It did give me a chance to discover who true friends were—Harry dropping by with a grocery bag of screener tapes of new releases from his video store so I won't get bored; Hal popping by to visit and cleaning my apartment when I can't get out of bed to do it; numerous people calling to make sure I'm okay and to shoot the breeze and telling me if I need anything just call. It made me more aware of other people's problems

and how insignificant mine really are; it taught me a bit more patience and a lot more sensitivity; it made me use my head to think to come up with ways to do what I can in new ways that won't disable me; it made me realize that sex doesn't have to end in flurried orgasm to be satisfying; and it forced me not to take what I have for granted. And—it reinforced my sense of humor (weird though it may be).

One last memory I'll share with you, and then it is time to go to bed since tomorrow is a school day and you kids have been up way too late. Another friend David (I know WAY TOO MANY Davids—it's like they have some kind of sonar homed in on me) had won tickets on a country music radio station to see Vince Gill in concert and VIP backstage passes to meet him after the show. David really wants me to go because we're best buddies and he thinks I look like something like Vince Gill (how could you help but be best buddies with a guy like that?). Of course, the show was an hour and a half drive away and I was again in the throes of a major back outage. But pass up a chance to meet Vince Gill????

David put down the passenger side seat back of his truck, I doubled the dose of painkillers and cinched up the backbrace, grabbed my best cane and away we go. I laid down as best I could during the drive, sat through the show, which was great—at least, what I can remember was great. I was chomping down Tylenol Codeine and zoning in and out of different levels of consciousness. During intermission the radio PR person came to tell us where to meet to go backstage after the show. Our seats were on the far left of the auditorium and we had to somehow get to the far right side as quick as possible after the show to get backstage. "No, David, you run for that door as soon as the show's over. If I can't make it in time at least one of us can meet him. Tell him I think he's cool...zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz. Huh? What? I wasn't sleeping, just resting my eyes."

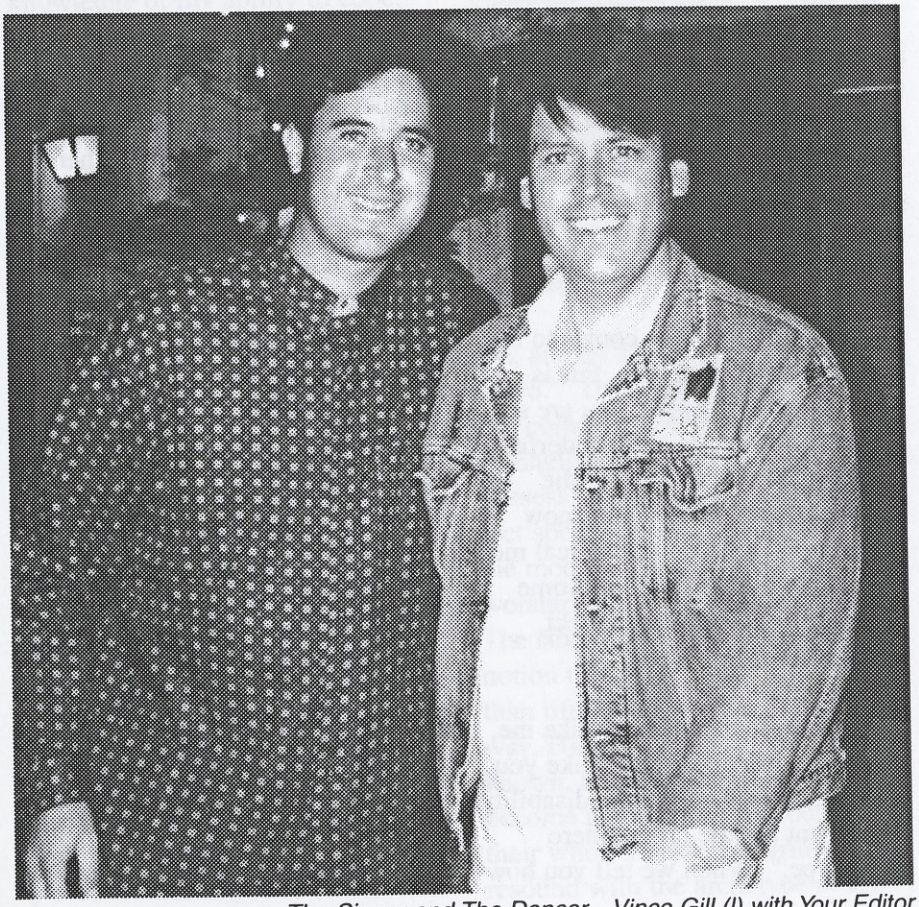
David, bless his heart, doesn't run for the door but grabs my arm and helps me hobble as fast as I can, frantically waving to the security people and the radio PR person that we're coming, we're coming, as I wave my cane futilely trying to part the sea of people while keeping contact with the ground. Had I been a couple of pounds lighter I believe David would've had me flying through the air, trailing me behind him like a wind sock.

We get backstage. Vince Gill is there, cooling off from the show and doing some practice putting.

There are six of us that have won the backstage visit. Vince Gill talks to us as a group and individually. He talks with me and asks if I had an accident. I give him a condensed version as I'm leaning heavily on my cane and hanging on David. Vince has a stage hand bring a chair for me. He says he hopes his show was worth the long drive. I tell him it was more than worth it.

It's time for pictures. Each of us gets to stand next to Vince Gill and the radio station PR person says SMILE—BIG SMILE. It's my turn. I struggle up from my chair and try to get my balance—and Vince Gill puts his arm around my back to help hold me up. He grins at me, I grin at him. His hand is warm and very strong and supporting. The PR person says to look at the camera and BIG SMILE NOW.

He smiles, I smile, and the flash goes off.



The Singer and The Dancer—Vince Gill (l) with Your Editor

ORDINARY PEOPLE
ORDINARY HEROES

It's no problem that you're disabled.
It's a problem that I admire you.

by Peter Geiger

We like receiving compliments. I like it that you think I am nice. But none of us likes receiving a relentless torrent of uncritical compliments. I'm not nice all the time, so if you keep on telling me how nice I am, at some point I will feel uncomfortable and think you are weird.

Like when my mother comes to my apartment and says, "Oh, this is such a great apartment, you are so clever, why, look at the wonderful towels you have chosen for the bathroom." At this point I know she is not in touch with the real me. She is instead prompted by some inner urge to see me as perfect, which I am not.

When nondisabled people, like me, do this to disabled people, like you, it is often dismissed in the disability movement as "the crip-as-hero stereotype." When we tell you how wonderful you are, waxing with lyrical enthusiasm over each of your—to you ordinary—accomplishments, you feel uncomfortable and think we're weird. Each time I insist on your heroic side, I risk losing touch with all those other parts of you: I can't see the non-heroic, the half-assed, less successful, self-doubting woman or man with, for heaven's sake, a disability, which is not and never will be an asset on the balance sheet of perfection. I'm out of touch with the ordinary you doing an ordinary human job of living.

A Part of Being Human

"You know, Peter, before my injury, I thought exactly the same thing." I was on the phone. I had plucked up the necessary courage to admit to this man, who is quadriplegic and has upper-limb muscle function only in his biceps, that I just cannot imagine being able or willing to exist as he has to. "When

you get injured," he continued, "you just get on with it because you have to; if it happened to you, Peter, you would manage too."

And this is probably true, isn't it? A part of being human is an inherent ability to expand ourselves to cope with outrageous fortune. Note the word "expand." The faculty is always contingent upon the event. Until it be my lot to fall prey to outrage—and very likely for a while after—I will remain without knowledge of my ability to cope. In an interview (The Los Angeles Times, 5/16/98) disabled gay writer Lorenzo Milam called the healthy, fully functioning human body a "time bomb." Some day it will blow up, but until it does, the "temporarily abled" are—have to be—in the dark.

And is this where we find the essential difference between disabled and nondisabled? In the fact that you have had to learn to manage, and I have not? Because you have had to learn to manage, that managing has become an everyday part of your landscape. How could you not be managing as you do? Big deal, get over it, what's the fuss and why the focus on the managing? That's how it looks from your end. Yet, from my end it's different. During the course of our time together it's implausible—and surely a disservice to you—if I fail to notice some of the managing aspects of your existence. But, as Milam says, "The loss of the body is something that cannot be imagined." Little wonder, then, that I regard with awe your ability to manage the unimaginable.

An Identifiable Paradox

So here we have the identifiable paradox: you are specially gifted, because you do have a managing ability which I do not have; and you are also not specially gifted, because I would—Milam would say "will"—acquire this ability if—"when"—I must.

Can we perhaps both agree to try to see the other's point of view? As being equally valid, depending on one's experience of disability or nondisability?

Oh, and let's look again at the word "hero." This ancient Greek word has come to acquire a connotation in English that it did not originally possess. The new meaning is "perfect specimen" and it comes from the modern cultural practice of worshipping sports and media stars. The studios carefully cultivate the notion that a star is not only larger than life but also perfect in every way. For instance, as is well known, homosexual stars (bad) become married stars (good) and their whole lives are rewritten to resound with the archetype of the

American Dream. But grab a book of ancient Greek myths off the shelf and read about Heroes. Note the capital H, which differentiates them from the modern, 20th-century hero. Not only were they imperfect, they were often total jerks and screwed up cosmically. As Milam reminds us, Oedipus, Medeia, Odysseus and their like had lives that you or I would in no way want.

What made them Heroes was not their enviable perfection, not their resemblance to Joe Montana or Robert Redford. They were ordinary people at whom blind Fate hurled unbelievable calamities—which they then faced with an Heroic expansion of the ordinary human qualities of will and courage. They did what they could.

As do you.

Another thing. Be very, very careful when you are tempted to dismiss my appreciation of you, or the admiration of any nondisabled person in your life, as being "just" the "crip-as-hero stereotype." Yes, you are not a small-h hero: this is not about your being all-perfect and having the greatest bathroom towels. But you are a Hero, and to retreat from that distinction belies all those operations, pressure sores and bloody stumps, all the pain, fear, anxiety and depression your disability has brought you. Be very, very careful whenever tempted to disavow your Heroism. If you deny the legitimacy of my admiration for your—to me—larger-than-my-life ability to face what my present nondisability prevents me from imagining, if you deny me this avenue of appreciating you, your choices in our relationship become impoverished and likely to disappoint.

Some Suspect Choices

One such route to disappointment is via the psychology of suspicion. If I can't be drawn to you by your Heroism, then it must be because of some warped and peculiar thing in me. This is the most culturally entrenched form of ableism. Perhaps I have a "caregiver complex" or even a "disability fetish." Some nondisabled people believe these interpretations. To counter the guilt they hype it up, sometimes calling themselves "devotees" of the disabled.

An alternative choice for you is to actively avoid the company of the nondisabled and seek only someone disabled. Association, whether for friendship or romance, between one disabled person and another will have the same effect as any communion of people sharing a characteristic—it will help build a positive sense of who you are as a person with that attribute, in this case

the attribute of disability. The only trouble is, as ABLE-TOGETHER Magazine former editor Bob Guter discovered in a straw poll, so many disabled people seem reluctant to forsake the company of nondisabled people, finding no fewer nor less thorny ableist issues with a friend or partner with a disability than they would with someone like me. Most gay disabled men Bob polled said their preference is for a nondisabled buddy or boyfriend.

A third road appears to afford relief by steering clear of the disability-issues minefield altogether. You want to be appreciated "for yourself" by someone who "doesn't pay any particular attention to" your disability. You want people to say about you, "Oh, I don't really think of you as disabled!" Perhaps you even want to say that about yourself. You want to be noticed, sought out and appreciated, but by someone who apparently doesn't notice some very crucial things about you, is that it? Does this route take you too very much further on the journey to what you want? I can think of one attractive, wheelchair-using gay man I know who studiously avoids dates with decent, goodlooking, nondisabled men with a predisposition honestly to admire him as an attractive wheelchair user. Instead, he cruises the bars and Internet chat rooms for a man with that elusive predisposition for selective attention-paying. So far as I know, he is still looking.

Do you want to be like the Heroes of old, who so often succeeded not in overcoming their fate, but only in heaping—very humanly—yet more of life's portion of awfulness upon themselves? If you sin against the truth of your experience—and mine—by denying your Heroism, you may yet suffer injuries over and above those conferred by your disability. You may find you have chosen to lose the possibility of a good friend, companion, lover. If you dismiss as "stereotypical" someone's honest, straightforward and understandable admiration for what you in truth are, have endured and accomplished, you may remain lonely for longer than you want.

Now this is the place to stop being Hero and break the stereotype, if you can. ✍

Peter Geiger has recently rejoined the board of ABLE-TOGETHER Inc. He is still nondisabled. "Heroes" was originally published in the Summer 1998 A-T and has been republished in the September 1999 issue of New Mobility ***Magazine.***

Disneyland—cooling off by the fountain with Julie and Mike…

…and waiting to get scared at the Haunted Mansion ride with Bret and Julie

TRIP OF A LIFETIME

TRAVELLING AROUND THE USA

Stuart Winstone *crosses the pond*

YOU KNOW, YOU GET THAT JEALOUS FEELING when you hear of your friend's travel tales abroad, who come back looking all healthy and tanned! My family regularly travel abroad, my sister being no exception, she's always abroad! So, now it's my turn...But, being physically disabled and using a wheelchair meant extra planning. With the help of the Internet and Penpals (A-T) and several visit to the travel agents, I chose the US of A.

Departure date, and on the road to Gatwick Aiport. No turning back now. Oh boy, I was nervous to be leaving the security of my home to travel abroad for eight weeks. I had half my luggage full with medical supplied. Didn't want to find myself buying expensive American medical services!

I had a little trouble with an airline official in the Airport (he wanted me on the plane straight away) and I needed to go to the toilet *before* I boarded the plane, as I knew I couldn't get into those cramped toilets on board the plane. I kicked up a fuss—just about keeping my anger under control. The good thing about travelling on an airplane is that the disabled have the privilege of getting on the plane first, and come off last at the other end! I was well looked after aboard American Airline by a nice young male steward from Chicago who has a lot back pain from a car accident.

At Boston the porter carried my luggage through to arrivals where Billy was waiting for me. Billy is a spinal injured man who happens to be deaf and communicates through sign language. No problem I thought, I know a few signs my self. *"Oh, No,"*—he doesn't understand me. That's because American Sign Language is *different* from British Sign language! I soon get the message—"Move your ass, we got a long drive home!" Some 250 miles north. We arrived in the dead of night not far from the Canadian border in the Adirondack National Park area (some 6 million acres).

Travelled in his well kited out luxury transit fulled adapted (now why can't we British have this kind of

motor!) up windy White Face Mountain road, thanks to ex-president Roosevelt who had the summit made accessible to the wheelchair users. Fabulous views across the valley, lakes and hills with trees turning to their autumn colours. On descending the steep winding mountain road, smoke started coming up from the front wheel. Billy looked a little perplexed. I signed, "I think the brake pad seized up. Stop! Wait for it cool down," and find a garage to sort out the problem. By the time we got down the mountain it was dark. We stop for a bite to eat. I try to phone Billy's parents. No answer—Billy decide to sleep rough at the nearest camp site (Billy loves camping!) With two dogs and not prepared for camping I was *worried.* It was a freezing night sleeping with our clothes on in the back of Billy's converted ford Van. I tossed and turn all night. Billy was fast asleep!

In the morning I phone Billy's garage and they would not be able to come until 4pm to tow the vehicle. One hundred dollars! I try phoning other local garage, no luck, it is Labour Weekend, everybody is on holiday! We survived by eating the remains of the snacks we bought the day before. 4pm came and went. Billy and I were starving! Billy said, *"I am going to drive home."* Along the road, to our surprise the brake pads were free. We pigged ourselves at a top restaurant in Lake Placid on the way home!

Billy lives right next to a fresh water lake. I soon discovered what it was like to swim there. The tricky bit was getting in and out of the water. Billy bought along his old wheelchair, which would save ours from getting wet and rusty. Good to see lifeguard on duty and a few folks sun bathing.

Once I lowered myself in the water, there was no turning back, *"Ahh its freezing!"* but beautiful with the lake surrounds by the pine forest trees right down to the edges. Billy nudged me. Watch your toes. There are some big hungry turtles in here!

Later we went aboard the Lac Du Saint Sacrement steamboat in the early evening to sail the 32 miles length of Lake George. Seeing lots of smart, up market lakeshore homes with their own boat house and state flag, watching the sun go down, chatting to other folks, it was a beautiful evening and relaxing ride.

By this time I had two wheelchair punctures. Glad I had my repair kit. Billy thought this was poor show and booked me into his local wheelchair services and I had punc-

ture proof tyres fitted.

The next day I was on my way back to Boston for my next destination flight. Doesn't time fly by when you are having a good time on holiday.

I was supposed to arrive at Chicago 2.00pm in the afternoon but my flight was cancelled just before take off due to faulty air conditioning and radar system. Rebooked to another flight, 3 hrs later and arrived at Chicago starving (no in flight lunch) got myself a light snack, and reported to Alamo car hire desk. *"Your car will be here in 1 hour."* As soon as I looked in the small Swift Suzuki car I said, *"No hand controls, I can't drive that!"* So, I went back to Alamo desk. Alamo eventually said we might have a car ready for you tomorrow! I then realised my friend has not turned up to meet me. I try phoning him. No answer. The day was so turning to evening, I was getting worried.

I contacted another A-T guy— *"Chicago is a bad city for a stranger like you."* He booked up a local disabled transport service to come and pick me up at 9.30pm.

10.00pm came and went. **"I was real worried,"** tired and a headache was setting in. I search for help. An airport security guy could see I was in trouble, pushing my luggage around in a wheelchair in front of me—what a sight I must have been! He soon escorted me to the nearest hotel, The Hilton at the Airport, $297.50/night!

The security guy then offered to show me my room, was so tired, I would've said yes, if he offered to tuck me into bed!

I was soon fast asleep fully clothed on top the bed!

The next morning I pigged myself on a huge American breakfast and felt much better. Don't ask me what the room and hotel was like I can barely remember seeing the leather upholstery and gold bathroom taps! Come mid-day, Dave turned up as did Alamo, with a large Chevy Lumina, with hand controls, on the back of a truck outside the Hilton. Oh, I felt like a VIP!

Dave drove the 90 miles south to his home near the southern tip of Lake Michigan. It took me the best of the week to unwind from the hassle at the airport. At the end of the week Dave took 2 day drive me out to one of the Amish communities in and around Nappanee Indiana. This was a very interesting place to visit to see how these people live.

The **Amish**, North American Protestant group of Mennonite origin. The Amish have maintained a distinctive and conservative agricultural way of life despite the influences of modern industrial society. The name Amish is derived from Jakob Amman, a Swiss Mennonite bishop. He insisted that discipline within the church be maintained by excommunication. This entailed the avoidance, or shunning, by the faithful of those excommunicated. Conventional social relationships with the excommunicated, such as eating at the same table, buying and selling, and, in the case of a married person, marital relations, were forbidden. The Amish, subject to persecution in Europe, migrated in the 18th century to Pennsylvania, where their descendants are called Pennsylvania Dutch—the German *deutsch,* "German," was misunderstood as "Dutch." They then spread into Ohio, other mid western states, and Canada. A rural people, their skill in farming is exemplary.

The most conservative are known as Old Order Amish. They dress in a severely plain style, using hooks and eyes instead of buttons to fasten their clothes. They ride in horse-drawn buggies instead of automobiles, and the adult males wear beards. Religious services are held in homes; foot washing is practiced in connection with the communion service; discipline is enforced by shunning; and marriage with outsiders is condemned. Other Amish groups, such as the Conservative Mennonite Conference and the Beachy Amish Mennonite Churches, are milder in discipline and less set apart from the world. All share the practice of believer's, or adult, baptism and often refuse to take part in civil affair—to vote, serve in the military, and so forth. The Old Order Amish numbered about 80,800 in the early 1990s; the Beachy Amish about 7,000.

By now, I was getting used to driving on the wrong side of the road and parking in blue disabled bays instead of UK's orange ones. I had my orange badge displayed, which some highway patrols looked at carefully—"*Never seen these before"*—and I not seen police carrying firearms, I just couldn't take my eyes off the police officer's pistol.

On this side of the pond, America do not have roundabouts over here, (I think they call them "rotary" and I only came across one speed camera in the whole of my travels in USA! The good thing is petrol—*"Gas"*—is very cheap about 75p per gallon, just as well, the average American town seem to be so spread out, with their own large car parks in between.

Before I knew it I, was packing again, saying my good byes to catch my next flight…

Final episode to follow…

I was glad to be met by my A-T penpal Bret at San Francisco Airport. Alamo car hire did not have a car ready for me, so I was lifted into the hotel shuttle bus, and the next day the same people got me back to Alamo depot and I came away with a car with hand controls.

Bret has a deteriorating spinal condition. He was working, so got his fellow worker in the local hospital to give me a guided tour of San Francisco, a very interested city.

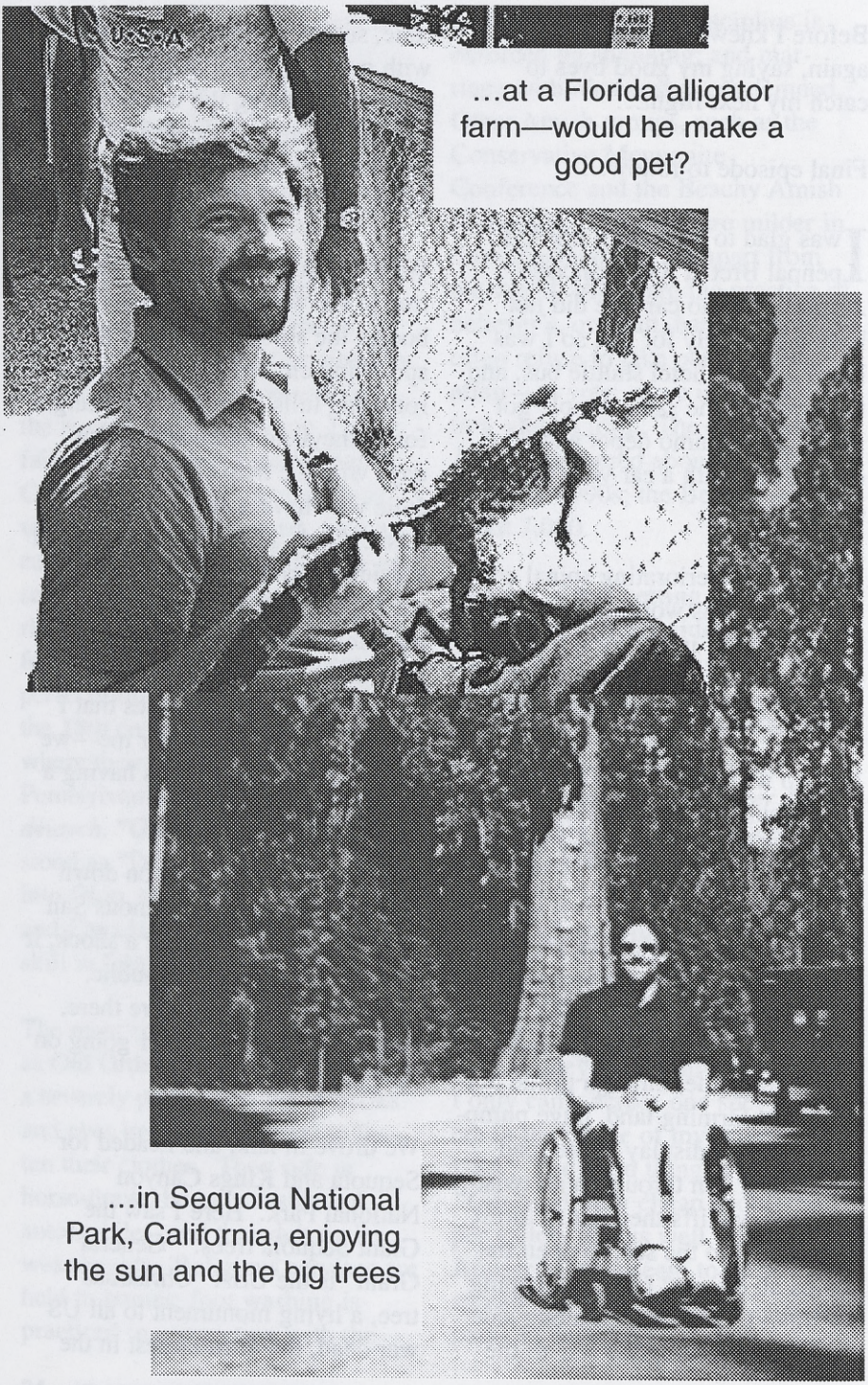
Met up with Peter of A-T over a nice evening dinner in downtown Castro district…a very gay friendly and relax community.

The following week Bret and I took turns driving down the beautiful California coastal road, "Monterrey Drive." We drove through interesting countryside, through prime horticultural farming land, huge pumpkins were on display at the road side stalls. On through high twisting narrow cliffs then dense forest right down to the sea, to open flat plains all dry and barren sweeping far inland. We traveled along side the coast watching the sea all the time, seeing beautiful inlets, bays with miles of sandy beaches, the odd surfers riding the waves of the Pacific Ocean, and occasional patches of the Giant Sea Kelp glistening under the sun.

We eventually came to LA, and true to the words in the travel books, the smog hangs over the sprawling city trapped by the surrounding hills. We heading straight for Disneyland and had two fun days with the help of Mike and Julie who have a all year passes to Disneyland. Mike, being a talented musician, produces some sound tracks for the likes of Disneyland and Hollywood. Between them they thoroughly spoilt me, getting me on a lot of the big rides that I thought be impossible for me—we were a like bunch of kids having a whale of a time.

Bret and I then traveled on down the coast to the world famous San Diego Zoo, but we in for a shock, it was an open day to the public. Thousands of people were there, and we soon got out after going on the guided bus tour.

We drove in land and headed for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. Here I saw the Giant Sequoia trees. "General Grant" is the USA "Christmas" tree, a living monument to all US war dead, the third largest in the



…at a Florida alligator farm—would he make a good pet?

…in Sequoia National Park, California, enjoying the sun and the big trees

world. Annual Christmas services are held at the tree. Height 267.4 feet, est. age 2,000 years. Their thick fibrous bark protects the sequoia from damage in all but the hottest wildfire, in fact the tree benefits from the fire, the fire burning other competing trees and opening up the seeds to start its germination into another giant sequoia.

It was a beautiful sight as we left the park as the sun was setting, I sure would love to return here, by the end of the week I was back on the plane heading back East across America. A longer flight than my London to Boston, I arrived over cloudy Miami, Florida, as we came into land I soon notice the humid heat.

I waited one hour for the incoming British Airways flight for Trevor my Deaf friend from England, we soon got ourselves to Alamo Car Hire Depot, and got away out of the huge sprawling city and the oppressive heat, glad to have the air-condition in the car working full blast.

We headed South to the long chain of Islands (some 200) that make up The Florida Keys, arrived late in the cool evening at the Westin Key Resort Hotel in Key Largo. The hotel surround is by bush, palm trees with two giant flame torches guiding you to the entrance and with the sea on both side with its own beach and boat mooring at its doorstep. *"I'm going like it here!"*

Slept soundly, enjoyed a large English breakfast at the roof top restaurant with its open balcony peering over the top of the trees providing a grand view of the bright green-blue sea water and islands beyond, soaking up the sun. We were occasionally entertained by the wild squirrels that came and went with our scraps from our table as we ate our meal!

We ventured out to visit the Everglade National Park. The Everglades is a unique wetland marsh ecosystem on the margin of the tropics of southern Florida. Covering about 5,000 square miles and averaging 50 miles wide and 6 inches deep. Its slow flow of water supports grasslands, thick forests, and a diverse group of animal, fish, and bird life.

Lifted by two stocky build men to experience an exhilarating ride on an air boat across the marsh seeing the wildlife, feeling the wind through my hair and the fine cool spay when the driver does he little twist and turns. We saw and learned more about alligators and crocodiles later at the Crocodile Farm, then onto the Center for Injured Dolphins.

We did a day trip down to the once

Please see WINSTONE, page 31

NEWSMAKING

by Peter Geiger

A-T IN 2000

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Something Old...

ABLE-TOGETHER Incorporated reaches the millennium revitalized by two new board members and program heads—and men in our constituency may expect more of the same ol' winning formula! As A-T Magazine enters its *seventh* calendar year of uninterrupted publication, we can note that we have changed the landscape with *our* particular way of looking at the interface of disability and nondisability as experienced in the lives and relationships of bisexual and gay men. The Universe makes way for what deserves to flourish: that A-T's *first* grantwriting endeavor struck gold illustrates the landscape change—the gay mainstream can no longer avoid noticing us. And by granting funds for, specifically, the Cafe A-T program, Horizons aligns with A-T's emphasis on men's-relationships *in community.*

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Something New...

The apple falls not too far from the tree: fans of former A-T Magazine editor Bob Guter will be glad to know he has opened a new webzine, *BENT: A Journal of Cripgay Voices.* The URL is **http://www.bentvoices.org** BENT, says Bob, is all about what it's like to live in the land where gayness and disability collide. Bob invites YOUR participation. He's especially interested in first-person accounts of cripgay life as you're living it right now. Send him a proposal at **mystory@bentvoices.org**

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Something Borrowed...

"Many are called but few are chosen." Many of you tell us you wish to see a Cafe A-T in *your* local gay cafe. As A-T's worldwide database swells, so does our ability to hold Cafes A-T in large population centers—but only if *you* help *us.* Get in touch with me, please!

You

are cordially invited to

Cafe A-T 2000

Sun Jan 23th/2-5pm	**Sun Jun 18th/2-5pm**
Sun Feb 20th/2-5pm	**Sun Jul 16th/2-5pm**
Sun Mar 19th/2-5pm	**Sun Aug 20th/2-5pm**
Sun Apr 16th/2-5pm	**Sun Sep 17th/2-5pm**
Sun May 21st/2-5pm	**Sun Oct 22nd/2-5pm**

at: Dolores Park Cafe,
501 Dolores Street @ 18th
San Francisco, CA 94114

by kind permission of Dolores Park Cafe

In SF's gay Upper Market,
easily reached by BART/MUNI.
Join a bunch of good men like you
Friendly, w'chair accessible location

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*dates and venues subject to confirmation: please leave your telephone number on the voice-mail so we can call you back

Cafe A-T 2000 San Francisco is hosted by Chris Hewitt.
The Cafe is made possible through a generous grant of funds by The Horizons Foundation

You

are cordially invited to

Cafe A-T LONDON

Sat Mar 18th/noon-3pm **Sat May 20th/noon-3pm**

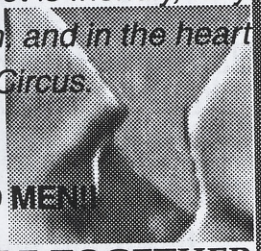
Sat Jul 15th/noon-3pm **Sat Sep 16th/noon-3pm**

Sat Nov 18th/noon-3pm

at: Rupert Street Cafe Bar,
50 Rupert Street, Soho, London W1

by kind permission of Rupert Street

Join a bunch of good men like you for brunch, coffee or what you will from Rupert Street's selection of well-priced and delicious food and drink. Rupert Street is friendly, fully wheelchair accessible, including restroom, and in the heart of Soho's gay village, close to Piccadilly Circus.



BE SEEN HAVING A GOOD TIME
WITH OTHER DISABLED/NONDISABLED MEN!

Cafe A-T London is sponsored by **ABLE-TOGETHER**
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***RSVP to:** [44] - [0]1582 705257
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Cafe A-T 2000 London is hosted by Doug Groom.

WINSTONE, continued from p. 27

pirates capital of the Caribbean Seas, **Key West.**

As we travel down the highway hopping from one beautiful island to the next, I thought, *"I'm living in the wrong place,"* but as we approach, Key West (a colonial town) we saw the damage Hurricane George did, huge piles of bush wood, plastic bottles, cans, paper etc ever where and some homes completely disappeared with only its concrete foundation, drive and a few gardens plants to show a home once stood there.

Key West, another American Gay friendly town, we had arrived during Halloween Week,with people in fancy dress and street stalls selling Caribbean, African trinkets, merchandise etc.

Trevor and I stopped for a lovely seafood evening meal then an evening drink at one of several gay friendly bars, watching the street fill with people late into the evening. I had a little trouble dragging Trevor away from the places… He was all eyes, watching some hunky guys flaunting their dicks at one another!

Every day we went to a beach with a lagoon sheltering the water from the open Atlantic waves, here I soaked up the sun, and surprised a few onlookers when Trevor dragged me on a beach mat then into the water, then folks saw Trevor tip me into the water, and hurried over to ask if I was ok—*"Oh, yes, he swims like a fish!"*

We return to Miami handed over the car keys and rested at the local hotel for our early morning flight back to London, where we were told high winds and thunder storms have washed the country with floods for the past two weeks.

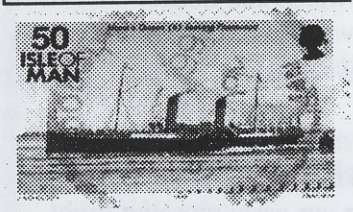
Sure enough, I was shivering in the cold November winds as I came off the airplane, wishing I were back in sunny Florida.

One mile from home, crying out for the toilet, my warm bed and hot cuppa tea, I found myself stuck in the car stalled and flooded by the rising muddy river water, that the road had disappeared under, waiting for help to come.

What a way to end a fabulous holiday! ✍

Stuart Winstone grew up hearing-impaired and was spinal injured at age 32; a former farmer, he lives in the english county of Avon. In homage to deaf use of language, Stuart's article has not been edited for grammar and syntax.

BACK TALK



LETTERS
VOICE-MAIL
E-MAIL

ABLE-TOGETHER may print extracts from your communications, identified by your initials and state, unless you specifically ask us not to

HOW TO REACH US

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415 522 9091
VOICE MAIL/UK:
01453 832782
LETTER POST:
ABLE-TOGETHER
P. O. Box 460053
San Francisco
CA 94146 USA

MAKING PUBLISHING HISTORY

I want to extend my appreciation for your offer of a complimentary subscription to Able-Together Magazine. I am pleased that we will be able to preserve this important publication as part of the Human Sexuality Collection at Cornell University…I would like to be able to preserve one complete set in excellent condtion so that we can make it available to activists and researchers in the future…Lastly I thought you might like to take a look at our newly designed web site. It includes a new online Sexuality Research Guide which I hope will be helpful to many people out there on the web. Its address is: **http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/HSC** We are happy to be in partnership with you to preserve your publishing history.

B. Marston, Curator, Human Sexuality Collection, Cornell Univertsity, NY

Able-Together is honored by your intention to preserve issues of the Magazine as a record and resource. We thank you for your recognition of the publication's importance…We believe the only complete set in existence is the one supplied to the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California…however the editorial and articles for all issues you are missing are retrievable from diskette storage. Thank you also for your referral to the URL of your library's new online Sexuality Research Guide. We would be honored if you would be willing to create a link to the A-T Web Site, which is to be updated early next year. Again, many thanks to you for seeing in the endeavors of A-T Inc something worth preserving for the future.

A GUIDE TO CONTACT AD LISTINGS

How to Reply to a Coded Ad: Put your letter in an envelope, seal it, and put the A-T code # of the advertiser you are replying to in the top right corner of the envelope; if you know your A-T code #, put this (or your initials) in the bottom left corner; **do not put your return address on this envelope**; put this envelope, together with the correct reimbursement for forwarding, please, (see below) in another envelope. This outer envelope should have your return address: seal, address to A-T and mail! You may respond to as many coded ads as you wish, and put all the code-numbered envelopes in the one outer envelope to mail to us.

Content: We believe the best kind of ad is the one that gives the reader the most accurate idea of who you are. We therefore encourage ad length (but reserve the right to edit) and accurate statements of personal statistics such as age and weight. Bear in mind that A-T readers are likely to want to know whether you are disabled or nondisabled, so please include this information. Try to be as detailed as you can about yourself and your way of being and presentation in the world, because it very greatly helps both you and potential responders if they can gain a reasonable picture of you from the ad. ***We encourage changes and updates to ads!***

Editing Policy: Although ABLE-TOGETHER strives without judgment to encourage honest self-expression we are aware that many of our subscribers may feel depersonalized and objectified in response to certain personal contact ad material. Because of the importance A-T attaches to avoiding objectification and depersonalization in interpersonal relations, we may edit personal contact ads which seem to us to contain sexually overly explicit or overly fetishistic material.

Deadlines: ABLE-TOGETHER needs your ad copy by 5th March for Spring issue, 5th June for Summer issue, 5th September for Fall issue and 5th December for Winter issue. New, renewed or changed ads reaching us after these dates are not guaranteed to appear in the issue published at the beginning of the next month.

Postage: ABLE-TOGETHER does not seek to profit from forwarding replies to coded contact ads but we do ask that you send us full reimbursement for our postage costs in forwarding your reply to the advertiser:

- for US responses to US advertisers, this is a 33ct stamp;
- for US responses to Canada, this is a 46ct stamp;
- for US responses to advertisers outside the US or Canada, this is a $1 stamp;
- for overseas responders who do not have US stamps and wish to send a $1 bill, this will cover three replies within the US or two to Canada or one elsewhere; but please note that these rates are for minimum-weight letters; heavier items cost more to send, and when in doubt, please check at the post office.

Payment: Remittance of forwarding costs may be made to ABLE-TOGETHER in valid US postage stamps, in currency, or by personal check or money order drawn in US Dollars. Please, no international reply coupons or foreign currency checks for this purpose. All payments are sent to us at sender's risk. A-T does not accept responsibility for materials sent to us to be forwarded, and we reserve the right to destroy materials not accompanied by adequate reimbursement for forwarding costs. ✍

PERSONAL CONTACTS INITIATED THROUGH ABLE-TOGETHER CONTACT AD LISTINGS ARE DONE SO ENTIRELY AT THE RISK AND ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PERSONS CONCERNED: WE ENCOURAGE **YOU** TO **MAKE SURE** YOU ARE DOING WHAT YOU WANT TO BE DOING, AND WITH THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE DOING IT WITH; IF YOU DECIDE TO BE SEXUAL WITH SOMEONE YOU ARE VERY STRONGLY URGED **FIRST** TO CALL YOUR LOCAL AIDS/STD HOTLINE FOR ADVICE.

The A-T personal contact ads are divided into two sections. The BUDDY section is for advertisers who are not seeking contacts of a romantic or sexual nature. Respondents looking for contact that will lead to sex or romance should reply only to ads in the MORE THAN A BUDDY section.

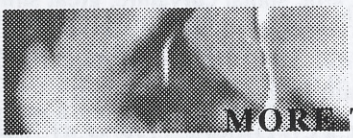
Seeking

A BUDDY

CENTRAL FLORIDA. Former hotel manager from Washington DC and San Francisco area. Now retired in the sun with Mickey Mouse, and Bear, my companion golden retriever. Sensitive, caring, 48 yo, 5'8", 150 lb., and goodlooking, nonsmoker, light drinker (cheap date, drunk on half a bottle of champagne). Keep fit by working out at local wellness center 5 days a week. I am partially disabl;ed from a prior brain tumor, but have remained whole in mind and spirit. I don't drive, but use a scooter to get around outside and maintain independence. I enjoy gardening, cooking, going out to eat, ice cream socials, Indian artifacts, and communing with nature. Keep my sense of humor sharp by watching hunmorous sitcom although enjoy reality of Touch by Angel. I value humor, kindness, honesty, and above all communication. If you poossess these qualities I would love to hear from you. *David Kenny, 510 Cranes Way #107, Altamonte Springs, FL 32701,* or ph: 407 339 2734.

WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS. GWM, 41 years old learning to come to terms with a congenital brain aneurysm—an AVM—which has left me without the full use of my left leg and essentially no use of my left arm and hand. I'm working with therapists and exercising with the hope to regain the use of most of my body. I also have to deal with panic attacks and the threat of seizures along with an inability to be aware of that which is on my left side (this is a cognitive not optical issue). All of these issues along with the fact that I

must live back with my parents make thoughts of intimacy damn near impossible. If there is another gay man out there who may be dealing with any of these problems, I would love to hear from him and hear what he has been through. Until this hit me I was working as a Graphic Designer—an occupation which paid the rent and allowed for my frequent trips to Tower Records and an occasional visit to Italy. I'm looking for someone to talk about my injury experiences with and would like it if this developed into a friendship. I would love to be in a position to feel comfortable seeking someone for an intimate relationship at some point down the road, but not now. For now I am so unaware of my own physical experiences that sharing them with others is totally foreign to me. I also long for the day when I can hug a man with both arms and feel him with both hands. I've been told this will never happen by most of my doctors and therapists. I don't want to accept all of the "never"s thrown at me. Can someone be the proof of a light at the end of the tunnel for me? Or at the very least maybe I could work towards the light together with someone else—while you do the same struggle of your own. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1836,* or **E-mail: KURTC@ibm.net**



Seeking

MORE THAN A BUDDY

CALIFORNIA. Handsome, funny, cuddly and charismatic disabled guy wants to meet men ages 21-45, disabled or not, for correspondence, friendship, romance, or whatever happens. I am equally comfortable with many different kinds of food, music, movies, theater, and people. Here is my photo and I would love to see a photo of you with your reply, but it isn't necessary. I am newly 34, but simultaneously feel much older and much younger; perhaps you feel the same way. Generally, I prefer people who are emotionally open, humorous, and compassionate, although none of these qualities rules out a healthy streak of sarcasm. I also hope to meet people who can accept and encompass my disability in its full context rather than singling it out for special attention. Get in touch and let's see what might develop. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #895,* or **E-mail: CyranoEB@yahoo.com**

CALIFORNIA. I'm a middle-aged GWM, 5'10", 200 lbs., using crutches occasionally when my ankle flares up. I am seeking a young man, disabled or nondisabled, preferably under 40, for friendship/romance/possible relationship. My interests include classical music, movies, museums, dining out. *Michael, POB 4054, Berkeley, CA 94704.*

SAN DIEGO. Looking for local quality men/boys 18-? who are comfortable enough around disability to overcome their fear of it. I had polio when I was 2 years old. I have always used a wheelchair and enjoy new technology when it becomes available. Though I am actively out of the rat race now, I have practiced law, built and sold real estate, had several small businesses. I appreciate intelligent conversation, affection, truthful and reliable friends, and creative, spontaneous and playful lovers. I love being loved by a man who is a giver and emotionally available. Although I am very self sufficient and not looking for an attendant, an intimate companion has made it possible in the past to do things I could never do aloneÉhelp at the right time is a very bonding thing! I use a power wheelchair, own my own home and car. I look and act straight but am out to anyone who's interested. I'm not good at long distance relationships or friendships. I'm attracted to lean, boyish types who also are responsible and mature. The gay scene is not my lifestyle merely because I have never felt very welcome in it and it seems too limiting. I am 54, blond, blu, 5'3Ó (if I could stand), 110 lbs, and have skinny legs and right arm, spinal curvature, great smile and am generally admired in my community. If any of this sounds interesting to you please write: *Jarrod, 1010 University Ave., PMB534, San Diego, CA 92103,* or **E-mail: jarrods212@aol.com**

CALIFORNIA. GWM 61, weigh 225#, 5'8", very hirsute. I moved to LA from NYC after teaching American history in high school for more than 25 years. I have MS and am wheelchair-bound. I am loving and outgoing. I am looking for friendship, preferably with someone younger. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #436.*

CALIFORNIA. GWM 45, 5'7", 180#, legally disabled 1989 w. atypical facial pain & major depression. Average to good looks, short brown greying hair and hazel eyes. I am clean and honest and live on a limited income. I enjoy b/w vintage film and like to mountain bike to nearest coffee shop. I would like to get out of my apartment and see nature—perhaps travel and see your part of the world. It's much more fun when you can share life's experiences with someone. *David Martin, 203 Neds Way, Tiburon, CA 94920.*

NE CALIFORNIA AREA. 50-something GWM seeking correspondence with all who reply. Goodlooking, gregarious/altruistic by nature/disposition. HIV-neg. Enjoy/use only safe sex practices. Live in High Desert. Clean shaven, shaven head—not skin head. 6'4", 210 lbs., looking for similar like-minded significant other candidates. *Micheal George Cordes, POB 1041, Bishop, CA 93515.*

CA

SAN BERNADINO AREA. GWM 60, 6'5", 200#, professional, caring, clean-cut, nondisabled, would like to meet a thin, lonely, disabled man 35-65, who is masculine and sincere. Friendship desired and maybe more. Will answer all. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1847.*

N CALIFORNIA. GWM 50's, 175#, 5'10", br/blue, nice looking, nondisabled, educated, masculine, sincere, affectionate and gentle, GSOH and moral values. Enjoy cultural activities, outdoors, reading, cooking, it's sharing the activity that's more important than the activity. Healthy lifestyle, swim, and play tennis. I have always been attracted to older men and would like to meet a 60+ post polio gentleman, who is caring, positive and independent, for honest, caring friendship/relationship. Most important is the "person" not the disability! *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #718.*

OAKLAND. Able GWM, 52, 6'4", 180#, open to meet new friends for conversation, local travel in my car, home cooked candlelight dinners, quality films and videos, wide range of music from romantic to classical. All are welcome. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1811,* or **E-mail: compeace@concentric.net**

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA. GWM 51, 5' 6", 155 lbs, polio survivor and cane user, iso black or dark-complexioned GM. Want to add zest to my life and having a man in my arms who truly wants to be there brings a sparkle to my eyes and a smile to my face. I lead an active and busy life, so when I stop, I'm tired. I'm looking for someone who is fairly quiet, gentle—shy ok—who desires to connect on a physical and emotional level ranging from occasional dates to sex buddy, boyfriends, soul-mates—let's let the connection between us decide where we go. I neither offer nor expect physical perfection, but hope for chemistry. I'm emotional, sometimes sad, but mostly level-headed and very stable: "walking the talk" is what I offer you, and hope to receive. Please call 415—621 2938 before 9 pm PDT, or *replies with correct postage please to A-T #1224.*

THE REAL THING. I'm a friendly, down-to-earth, 34 year-old GWM, looking for a longterm romantic relationship with a compatible guy. You share my love of movies, and might also be interested in theater, science fiction, history, politics, or psychology. I love to hug, kiss and cuddle with my man; you're the same way. I'm attractive, HIV-neg., a nonsmoker, 5'7", 135 lbs., moderately disabled—walk with crutches, go for walks in my cool new power 'chair. You are roughly 25-45, any race, attractive, intelligent, HIV-neg., also a nonsmoker. Local preferred, but—who knows! *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #013,* or **e-mail: sfshyguy@aol.com**

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Charlie, 56, 6', 180 lbs, blond/blue, mild heart condition, no problem for 10 years now. Seeking LTR with compatible mate. Enjoy cuddling, quiet times, talks, walks, traveling, SS, and you? Write, let's see what happens, photo appreciated. Be sincere. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1455.*

CALIFORNIA. GWM 52, 5'6", 145#, blu, br, 'stache, 18 years hemiplegic wheelchair user, eager for So. Ca. friends, nondisabled or not. I am a former hotel manager and now do AIDS volunteer work. I enjoy life, lite-health cooking, dining, conversations, classical music, opera, movies, theaters, museums, etc...Drink wine but not into bars or scene, do not smoke or do drugs. Also open to able compatible housemate & daily aide to share my beach area condo (lo-expenses). Be discreet. *Tom, 1525 Appleton #302, Long Beach, CA 90802, ph: 562 436 2880.*

COLORADO. Toothless Boytoy or Mantoy. Spanish/German GWM with CP, ambulatory, 50 years young, salt & pepper, beard & mustache, brown eyes, 5'4", 130 lbs, HIV-neg. I want to meet stable, healthy, talentedly-oral "Daddy-type" GWMs, nondisabled and disabled, 30-60 yrs. I have a lot to offer the right goodlooking deserving man. You must meet my requirements as I must meet yours. Positive responses gets positive results. Interested GWMs please write with photo (returned upon request) and I will send you mine. Look forward to some good times. Thank you. *Mr. Luis Perez, 1955 Arapahoe Street #806, Denver, CO 80202-1834,* or ph: 303 291 0806.

COLORADO. Early retired GWM, N/S, N/D, teddy bear type guy with clipped beard, hairy, is looking for LTR, handicapped or not, Into antiques, thrift store, flea market, classic cars, concerts, off-beat film, trips and you. Looking for <u>sane</u> same who is interested in not being alone, has some income, and not into gay lifestyle. *Occupant, POB 38471, Colorado Springs, CO 80937.*

DELAWARE. Hi! I'm a 38 year old disabled SGWM top, 5'11" tall, brown hair, blue eyes, 205 lbs. I'm caring, honest, fun, loving, in search of LTR and penpals 30-40 preferred, disabled or not, must be bottom. *Frank Veasey, POB 838, Bear, DE 19701-0838.*

WASHINGTON DC AREA. Black male, left hemiplegic stroke survivor, 46 years, 29 inch waist, HIV-neg., smooth skin, shaved head, would like to explore my feelings for men disabled or nondisabled bisexual or gay. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1871.*

DC AREA. Abled GM, young 50, 5'1", 125 lbs, brown hair, blue eyes, 'stache, glasses. Smoker, light drinker. Interests—music, dancing, long walks, swimming, intelligent tv, old movies, quiet nights at home. Race/disability friendly, seek same, height-weight proportion-

ate. Your photo gets mine. *POB 27, Lanham, MD 20703-0027.*

FLORIDA. GWM 43, 6', 200 lbs, br/br, nondisabled, in search of GWM 20-50 disabled who walks with crutches. I am an honest, caring, trustworthy male who is seeking to welcome new friends into my life. All correspondence will be answered. *Michael Kirnard, 1025 N. Thorpe Ave., Orange City, FL 32763.*

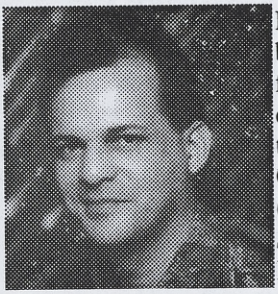
FLORIDA. My name is Matthew F. GSM 26 5'7" 165#, Hispanic, black hair, brown eyes, nondisabled. In need of a fine male with/without limitation (disability). I say limitation because out there is not disability, should be called limitation. Limitations that we have to overcome and live with! I would like to find the special male that I can share the good and bad moments of my life with. Someone that I can trust as my best friend, someone that can share with me his life too. I enjoy nature and travel, I like to cook and have a good time at home or out. Will answer all. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1898.*

MIAMI. GWM 31, 5'11". I have blond hair, blue eyes, and am a very handsome guy. Interests include working out, travel, art, films, and I love the beach! T-4 para for about 5 years now. I'm seeking stable, successful, athletic type guys. Please include a photo with your response. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1761.*

GEORGIA. Is it you? Are you the man who'll help me mend my broken heart? Attractive Puerto Rican, 47, s&p, mustache, Cancerian, low level paraplegic, would like to correspond with able-bodied & healthy, trim-sided men. Interested in cultivating relationship w/guys from just friends to potential lifemates. Would really like to find a special man who is semi-retired or with the ability to take time off from work, so we can spend time getting acquainted. I'm a sexual, passionate man & able to love from a deep, secure place. I love men of all ages, enjoy being romantic & w/the right man my kisses will have you reaching for sh–t that ain't there! I love to laugh, appreciate a sense of humor, and am a US Chef's Open Gold & Silver medallist. Enjoy exercising, riding my handcycle & the outdoors. Love to cuddle while watching a movie, have strong, tireless hands & adore massaging my man from top to toe & everything in between! Job-wise, while recovering from a second back injury, presently working on developing specialty food items to sell via Internet. If I've spiked your interest and you can dig my strong arms and skinny legs, please drop me a line and tell me about yourself. What are your hopes, goals & dreams? I would really like to know. Your photo gets mine. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #211,* or **E-mail: butchare@alltel.net**

ILLINOIS. 46 yo GWM with multiple sclerosis looking for friendship, romance, whatever. I use a cane. I use Viagra. I self-catheter-

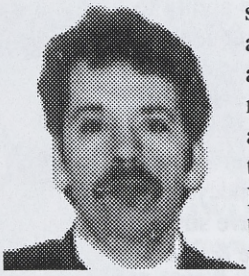
ize. For someone who is very inexperienced I get around. I look like Drew Carey. I act like the Dalai Lama. I'm a recovering crack addict on Prozac. Take a chance, I love to cuddle. Write me at *POB 09166, Chicago, IL 60609.*



ILLINOIS. Half Polynesian Gay Male, black hair, brown eyes, 03/20/62, 199 lbs., 5'11", alcohol/drug free. Bipolar Disorder. Animal lover—I have one deaf cat. I support animal causes and environmental concerns. I like penpaling, 'zines, and True Crime Stories. I'm shy at first, but have a quirky (or kinky) sense of humor. *Dana Kiger, 214 E. 7th. St. Apt. #215, Gibson City, IL 60936,* or **E-mail: DANAKIGER@juno.com**

CHICAGO. White male, short, slim (5'6", 130 lbs.) have slight spinal curvature, orthopedic shoe with lift gives me slight limp. Would like to hear from local in-shape guys (a handicap is no excuse). I'm working on my abs! Chicago N. Side, N. Burbs, student long hair a plus. I'm substance free. 8-1-Birthday at Oak Street Beach? Foreign corrrespondents welcome. A good friend great smile mean a lot! Let's explore Chicago and its ethnic restaurants. possible trip to Palm Beach Fall 1999! *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #062.*

MASSACHUSSETTS. Gwm born 8/8/62, 5'2", 185lbs, blue eyes, brown hair, mustache. I was born with a rare disability called *lymphatic vascular malformations.* Which means—1 *hemangioma:* a benign growth of rapidly dividing cells that form extra blood vessels; 2 *vascular malformation:* a permanent collection of abnormal capilliaries, veins, or lymphatics, occurring either as single channel type or in combination. So what does this mean for me? Well, I have a bigger left hand than normal, I am in constant pain all day and my right leg is affected by this and I can't do much walking; sometimes I use a cane. My interests are tv, music, hand-made crafts, photography, basketball, stamp collection, bank collection, swimming, bowling, playing cards and board games and many more things. If you are a nonsmoker, honest, trustworthy, loyal and caring, please send photo and phone. Looking for friends and possible relationship. *Bobby, 33 Merri Village, Merrimac, MA 01860,* ph: 978 346 4495, or **E-mail: rship33@aol.com**



IMPROPER BOSTONIAN... GWM 50+, bilateral a/k amputee, learning to walk in prosthetics, but know the wheelchair will be part of my everydays...Wish to get together with another man who accepts that I am in the process of learning how to share/express my preferred activities in ways which must adapt to present physical parameters...NO VANILLA, SCENTS, COLOGNE OR HAIRSPRAY...Am

pierced and tattooed, prefer leather, latex, and levis. Other interests include music, handcrafts, 3D jigsaw puzzles, travel, museums, good food, foraging through second hand stores/flea-markets, theater, and oriental art. Am doing the groundwork to start a local AMPUTEE SUPPORT GROUP...welcome contact with other amputees in this area who have also been going forward on their own. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1899,* or **E-mail: metalfeet@hotmail.com**

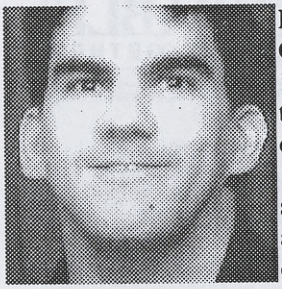
MASSACHUSSETS. There aren't enough men. Gay man, 30, enjoys rural life, going pretty places in a car, art, old movies, plays, heavy rock music, show tunes, Al Green (what a babe), film fests, strong, manly men with dark hair who like to be kissed, Tank Girl. Not into drugs, alcohol, psych meds, therapists, social climbing, s/m. Interested in hostory, reading, riding my bike, learning new stuff, Judaism. I have dark hair and eyes, slight build. I like white men, black men, Latino men, usually under 45. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1919.*

MARYLAND. GWM, mature, hairy, 6ft, blue/brown-gray, 205lbs. Life-long attraction to GMs with one leg shorter than the other or club foot or limp, also polio survivors. I am truthful, loving, monogamous and considerate. I like antiques, classical music & opera, cooking, travel, loving home in beautiful environment. My handicap is a short penis with small, mis-mated balls. Pen pals appreciated. Contact: *John, 1110 Fidler Lane #801, Silver Spring, MD 20910,* or ph. 301 589 1873.

MICHIGAN. Nondisabled GWM, 6', 180 lbs, would like to meet/correspond with guys who are amputees and/or wear dentures. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #799.*

NEW HAMPSHIRE. GWM, 50, 6', 185 lbs, reddish hair (some grey). blue eyes, big red mustache, nondisabled, honest, sincere, kind. I love the country and mountains; I collect and restore Victorian antiques, and have a business making custom crutches out of woods such as rosewood and ebony. I am attracted to men who are amputees. Looking to hear from an amputee, and from others abled and disabled, with a view to friendship, maybe more. Photo and phone # appreciated. *Ed Openshaw, POB 65, Rumney, NH 03266, ph: 603 786 9922.*

CENTRAL NEW JERSEY. GWM 44, 5'9", 195#, legally disabled 1988 with major depression, anxiety, chronic fatigue, arthritis, back and leg pain, and severe temporomandibular injury, pain and dysfunction (much of which is iatrogenic—resulting from orthodontia). I use a cane to walk and must rest and recline often. I also use dental splints at home. I receive SSD, and live with my parents. I have average to good looks. As ,my disabilities permit, I enjoy: gay community stuff, civil liberty, gentle conversation, television and films, nature, gardens, art, photography, music, silence. I especially appreciate the understanding of friends. E.M. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1895.*



NEW JERSEY. GWM 35, 5'10", 170 lbs. "As Good As It Gets." Have had Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) for 19 years, for which I receive SSD. I enjoy hugs, affection, touching, holding and being held, watching TV and movies, driving, traveling, humor, gay events/meetings, talking on the 'phone, swimming pools, singing, and my cat, Brownie. I am seeking a loving friendship, and a long-term relationship. I am pretty liberal and have Christian beliefs. I don't smoke or drink and prefer you be the same. I prefer a good-looking man with a pretty hairy chest and arms, but clean shaven. I like men 21-48, HIV-neg., caring, honest, trustworthy, very affectionate, romantic, easygoing and sensitive. Can relocate for the right person. Please include recent photo. Call or write. *Jeff Woerner, POB 7049, Plainfield, NJ 07060-0799,* or ph: 908 769 3665. God bless you.

NEW JERSEY. Outgoing, energetic, dynamic, nondisabled 48 yo GWM, 5'10", HIV-neg., with brown hair and hazel eyes, seeks the joy and pleasure of meeting a young, body-building, above-knee amputee for creative friendship. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1229.*

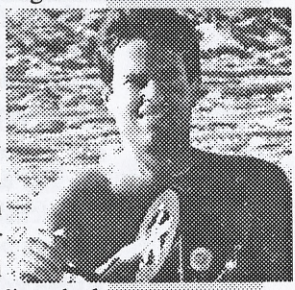
NEW YORK. GWM, 30 y/o, with Muscular Dystrophy, motorized wc user. I am 5'5", 150#, dark brown hair, brown eyes, Italian-American (which means I'm hairy). Starting grad school in Sept 1999 to become a guidance counselor. I love dining out, listening to disco music (yes, disco), & shopping. I'm heavily involved in disability activism/politics. I didlike bars/clubs. Looking to meet someone 25-40 y/o, disabled or not. You are humorous, optimistic, non-conformist, simplistic, considerate, and don't drink or use drugs. Seeking replies from NYC & Long Island. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #161,* or **E-mail: atrocchia@webtv.net**

NEW YORK. Hi! My name is Doug, a GWM 49, 5'11", 165-170 lbs, HIV-, with very slight cerebral palsy. I'm looking for a guy with or without a disability in age range 35-50. After work I'm into the performing arts, concerts, ballets, opera, lectures, and so on. I do not let my handicap keep me from doing the things I like or want to do but I want to meet the right guy to fill the other void in my life. Please be disease-free and a non-smoker. If you are interested send 'phone and photo to: *POB 275, Bronx, NY 10461.*

NEW YORK. My name is Tom. I'm 44, 5'5", 138#, br hair and goatee. I have my own business and am also an exhibiting artist in the US and Japan— had two one person shows in NYC in 1999. I enjoy unique people, good conversation and humor. I am a friendly and caring individual who is looking for other disabled persons who want friendship, companionship and love. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by getting together. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1880,* or **E-mail: TShnei554@aol.com**

NEW YORK. Attractive, nondisabled w/m with Daddy Bear looks and attitude, 51 yrs., 6', 275 lbs, mostly white beard and moustache, close-cropped hair, hairy body, piercings and tats, and the imagination to go beyond a partner's physical limitations. Long time disability activist interested in meeting men with a wide range of disabilities/differences. Enjoy guys comfortable with the idea that I could be attracted to them and their disabilities. But also love exchanging thoughts with guys new to being an object of desire. Got a long-term lover, but still seeking like-minded guys who I can share ideas, fantasies, fetishes, and yes, some rewarding one-on-one contacts with. Non-sexual interests include writing, theatre, costume design, crafts, music (Broadway to Bach, but little Rock). A body is a terrible thing to waste. Let's not be putt off by our differences, let's revel in them! Call Max at 718 852 1960 or **E-mail: BKBearMax@aol.com** or *replies with correct postage please to A-T #919.*

ADIRONDACK MTS, NY. GWM 43, look much younger, handsome mountain man, 5'6", 150#, br/br, chest hairy, funny, honest, deaf (ASL), C6-7 incomplete quadriplegic—caused by diving accident—look like paraplegic; healthy, down-to-earth, vegetarian, ex-ski instructor/racer. Very active person outdoors: hiking, campfire, chain saw, garden, wash my van, shovel the snow, hand cycling, swimming, travel, gay campground (all-male campground—fantastic!), wheelchair racquetball, weighlifting, bowling, also like indoor tropical trees and love my 2 dogs, Golden Retriever and German Shepherd. I have 2 jobs, I am an Architectural Barrier Consultant at Independent Living Center and I have a small business as woodworking. My business name is "Adirondack Woodcraft" that is cool! I want to share my or your place and my love the right guy. I love to have sex. Horny and get really hard. I will attend Abililities Expo in Metro NYC on April 14-16. Glad to trade a pic just ask. *Billy Searles, 112 Green Mansions Rd. 10A, Chestertown, NY 12817,* or **E-mail: BUMSKIER@WEBTV.NET**



NEW YORK CITY. Hi, my name is Alan. A NYC native, I'm 32 years old, 6'2", 180 lbs., dark brown hair, brown eyes, very good looking. I have Body Dysmorphic Disorder, Obessive-Compulsive Disorder, very mild Tourette's Syndrome, Essential Tremor, and I am recovering from alcoholism. I am a graduate student in museum studies/art history and have two other art-related degrees. I work as an art and antiques dealer. I collect books and ephemera and enjoy the flea market, thrift shops and museums. I'm intreested in disability issues and am a volunteer with the National Lesch-Nyhan Disease Registry. I'm not very interested in movies and TV. I am seeking a goodlooking, intelligent, disabled or nondisabled M up to 39 years old. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1553,* or ph: 212 989 1724.

NEW YORK. GWM, 44, 5'11", 155 lbs, good youthful muscular looks, swimmer's body, brown hair, hazel eyes, multilingual, nondisabled; interested in travel, reading, music from opera to house, and cooking; seeking disabled friend, 25-45,—especially if you are Arab, Indian or Latino. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #278.*

NYC. I'm Frank, 25 y.o., friendly, sensitive, vivacious, extroverted, and fun. One friend has described me as "Whitmanesque," which is flattering since Whitman is my poetic idol. I'm an unabashed Romantic, in the sense that I love nature, the expression of emotion, exercise of the imagination, and especially rebellion against social conventions. I'm an involved queer activist, a newspaper columnist, and graduate student. I have arthritis in most of my joints which causes noticable stiffness and occasional pain, but I do live very independently. I am looking to meet RELATIONSHIP oriented guys (mid 20's to mid 30's) who are similarly Romantic and extroverted. Let's explore the arts, read poetry, see films, go to museums and theater, cook, laugh, and LIVE. I will be interested if you're willing to invest the time to help something really wonderful develop. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1802,* or **E-mail: fs94@columbia.edu**

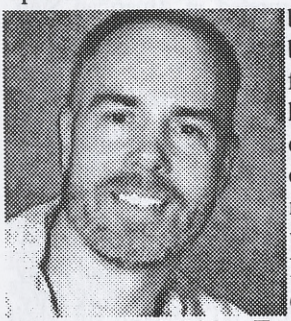
NEW YORK. Goodlooking GWM 40, nondisabled. I work in the arts and travel frequently. I am looking for disabled male friends for fun and whatever that may lead to. Guys ages 20-50 - perhaps with wheelchair, braces, post-polio - all welcomed. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #384.*

NEW YORK CITY. GWM, nondisabled, 40, 185, 6', very handsome with classic Mediterranean good looks, clean shaven, masculine, intelligent professional, muscular, gym-fit, HIV-neg., sensitive, stable, affectionate, easygoing and emotionally secure. For as long as I can remember I have always been strongly attracted to physically "different" types of guys. Looking to meet men to explore safe mutual sexual good times and more. Call 212 595 5755 or *replies with correct postage please to A-T #287.* or **E-mail: aex99@aol.com**

I LIVE IN THE MOUNTAINS OF NORTH CAROLINA. Nondisabled male, 62, 6'1", 220 lbs, gray hair, hazel eyes, hairy chest; I'm attracted to disabled men; I'm retired and travel a great deal, and would love to hear from you wherever you are. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #508.*

NORTH DAKOTA. Walt here, and I'm still lost out on the Dakota prairie. I was hatched here in 1952 (do the math), but escaped in 1970 and went to college in L.A. and Seattle. Most of the '70s were spent globetrotting with a gospel (sort of)-jazz/rock band. My MS surfaced while I was on the road in Europe back in 1973. After a year off, touring resumed until health said "no more." Following careers from graph-

ics designer to public relations, I ended up back in ND. Although health keeps me fairly sedentary, politics and disability issues keep me active. I am now a freelance writer for various periodicals, and my book, "I've Fallen and I *Still* Can't Get Up," a commentary on disability, is now available. When occasionally not in the wheelchair, I stand at 5'9" and tip the scale at 160#. Obviously, my salt and pepper crew cut is fast becoming history, but I do sport a trimmed beard. Despite growing up in an evangelical-fundamentalist home, my spiritual journey has taken me elsewhere. Interests exclude dope, tobacco, too much booze, and "political correctness;" interests include politics, music from opera to Elton, intelligent conversation and meeting someone of like mind. If you connect with any of the above, let's communicate: *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1295* or **E-mail: wdudley@pop.ctctel.com**

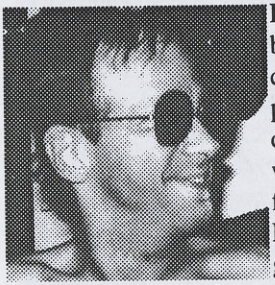


CLEVELAND, OHIO. GWM born 1941, 5' 8", 140#, brown/blue; diagnosis—MS; currently attempting to get better control of the following symptoms: walking difficulty, bladder and sexual dysfunction; personal interests: history, especially of Cleveland/Northern Ohio & Great Lakes areas, movies, trains, transit, historic preservation, naturism, gay male erotica. I am back in my home town after a career elsewhere, on extended medical leave prior to retirement. Always willing to hear from A-T subscribers in NE Ohio or visitors to our area. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #617.*

LOOKIN' FOR MY SOUL MATE... Oregon. Hi, I'm John, a groovy personality with an awakening soul. I'm 30, 5'4", 150#, and love to stay physically active. I'm pretty high functioning with an incomplete T-12 spinal cord injury of 10 years. I love being outdoors, boating, bicycling, music, travel, metaphysics and trying to find the "right" colors and plants for the house. I'm looking to talk with other guys, disabled and gay, around the country. I'm also looking to meet a swell guy (disabled or non) prefer under 35 and close to Portland for friendship and a long term relationship. Some things I appreciate in other guys are a lively sense of humor, curiosity, optimism and a sense of adventure. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1724,* or **E-mail: Mupper24@aol.com**

SEEKING COMPANIONSHIP. Gay Jewish Disabled White Male 51, 5'6", seeks GWM friend ages 40 to 60 (or thereabouts) for companionship/relationship. Intelligent, active in community affairs, disability and gay rights, attuned to progressive politics, and work in professional position. Have blond silky hair, trimmed gray beard, moderately hairy chest. Interests include reading, museums, travel, serious movies, international affairs, politics and photography. Enjoy country-western and folk music

and dancing. Can do modified form of two-step couple dancing and enjoy traditional East European, Balkan, and Israeli music and dancing. Am hard of hearing and have Cerebral Palsy. Use hearing aids and use cane to assist in mobility. Cannot drive, but can use regular public transportation to get around independently. Enjoy attending folk music concerts with progressive political bent that are interpreted in American Sign Language. Non-smoker. No drugs. Knowledge of ASL, or willingness to learn, a plus. Alan. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1762.*



PENNSYLVANIA. GWM 39 years old with a swimmer's build, 5'9", 125 lbs, with cerebral palsy. I am masculine and cute. I have my college degree in theatre. I already wrote a play and it was staged at Penn State University in the main campus. Believe me - I don't let my disability stand in my way of anything or anybody. I live on my own, one hour away from Philadelphia and one hour away from New York City. My interests are the theatre, working out at the gym, dancing, going to the beach in the summer, laying in the sun to get a dark tan without a tan line, partying, going to see male dancers, and traveling. Believe me, I do everything and anything. I am looking for someone to be with to enjoy lifeand to have a blast with. And...Hey, is there any guy out there who wants to take a vacation? Please contact me if you do. I was thinking about going to one of the islands, just lay out on the beach in our bikinis and look at the view. *Bill Lasch, 1101 Seneca Street #208, Bethlehem, PA 18015, ph: 610 866 4679.*

REFRESH MY MEMORY... Haven't I met your type before? You're a guy who's sweet without being syrupy. Character has more meaning to you than a word used to describe a Disney figure. Your emotional stability is as unshakable as earthquake-proof architecture. Grease is about as camp as you get. Laughter is a regular part of your day. And you're not only comfortable, but also flattering in jeans and a T-shirt. If we haven't met, maybe we should. Seeking a GM with a higher-functioning disability or who is able-bodied with the above qualities for a possible monogamous relationship. There's a handsome GWM, 28, 130#, and college educated on this end who has full upper-body range and strength despite tetraplegia. Interests include travel, personal enrichment (classes or reading), volunteerism, desktop publishing, the Internet, and exploring new pursuits. Philly area preferred. Please reply with photo, phone, *and correct postage to A-T #1918,* or **E-mail: Kingston@dellnet.com** Mention Able-Together in the subject line.

PHILLY SUBURBS. Lonely for the touch of a masculine man! Hi! My name is Dave, I am a 40 y.old GWM, 6", 170#, brown hair, blue eyes, who has muscular dystrophy and use a wheeelchair. I am a very emotional and sensitive man, who loves life. My interests are meet-

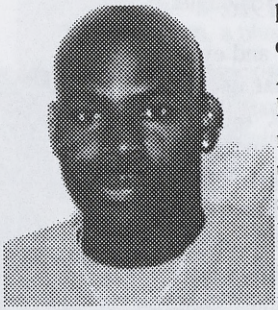
ing new people, disabled or nondisabled, and getting together with friends. I also enjoy computers, movies, music, sports, and landscaping, travel, the beach, and worshipping the sun. I am open to all new friendships, am also seeking a monogamous relationship with a trustworthy GM, nondisabled preferred. I would like to meet someone who is also passionate and romantic, someone who likes to take things slow and who likes to get to know someone emotionally as well as physically. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1916.*

PENNSYLVANIA. Good guy, 40, 5'11", 165#, brown hair and eyes, good-looking, masculine, solid, nondisabled. Personable, casual, unconventional, active, affectionate. Enjoy music, the outdoors, movies, sports, exercise, good food, good conversation, good books, and good times. Have positive, sincere, lifelong interest in men with disablitlies, particularly upper extremity amputees and survivors of SCI, polio or spina bifida who use crutches. Maybe it's the athletic aspect of the upper body, my thoughts on intimacy and disability, discovering him whom others may overlookÉNow I am embracing this interest and seeing where it leads me: I'm more than happy to explore and explain with the right guy. I hope to offer a high degree of awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to a disabled man to see what we can enjoy or build together. Have dated a few men with disabilities and all was ok. If you like what you hear and the above seems to fit, please be in touch. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1428 or ph: 215 829 9650.*

TEXAS. GWM 52, brown/hazel, 5'0", 131 lbs, HIV-neg., smoke, alcohol & drug free (12 yrs. recovery), seeking friendship, cuddling, safe sex, giggles, & perhaps love; but no wedding rings. I'm not into penpals or telephone friendships. From old polio I have scoliosis (spine curves to right), a hump on right side of back and an underdeveloped left shoulder—also slight, seasonal asthma. I'm handsome, mischievously sexual, and fit. I question authority—my own, as well as others'—and I'm playfully irreverent. I'm a community college professor, professionally secure and financially comfortable. I love music: R&R, big band & classical (baroque to 20th c), astrology (student for 20+ years), *X-Files, Cops, America's Most Wanted,* antiques, bookstores, conversation, low fat dining, light exercise, Monopoly, Scrabble and old b&w movies. Please be: able to travel (as I am) should we decide to meet. Also be: DD and smoke free, sensitive, fun, fit within your ability, willing to try things you haven't, possibly a polio survivor and/or an amputee, or even physically normal. Photo gets mine. *Billy Roberts, ph: 512 385 8313,* or *replies with correct postage please to A-T #956.*

TEXAS. Hi, I'm Joey, GHM 30, 5'5", medium build, 160#. I was born with Spina Bifida. Use crutches, very active, and do not let my disability slow me down. I enjoy tennis, basketball, hockey, traveling, museums, opera, walks in the park or weekends at the lake camping, gazing at the stars. Favorite books are novels by Anne Rice, favorite

foods are Mexican and Chinese. I welcome correspondence from able or disabled guys, prefer active guys younger than me. Also would like to hear from guys who have to wear diapers. Pen pals welcome. Please write with mailing address and preferably photo. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1883.*



TEXAS. GBM, 33, 6', 180, C7-incomplete quadriplegic. Shaved head, brown eyes, athletic build, college educated, wheelchair user, just an adventurous, energetic, clean-cut, all-American guy. Looking to meet friends who share similar interests. My interests are weightlifting, going to the movies, dining out, attending sporting events, theater, and traveling. I am extremely active in wheelchair sports, such as quad rugby, wheelchair racing and football. Neither age nor races are issues, if you're interested e-mail or write...*Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1885,* or **E-mail: neulsjr@swbell.net**

TEXAS FARM BOY. GWM 60, good natured, physically active and fit, college educated, very masculine, 5'10", 170#, blond hair, blue eyes, hairy, fair complexion, HIV-neg., and no drugs ever. I'm highly spirited, very sensual/sexual and affectionate. My disability is very moderate and invisible. I have a congenital eye problem and wear glasses for good correction. Also have a low-back problem L-4/L-5 that prevents heavy lifting. Otherwise in excellent health and good shape. My friends say I'm a bit rough around the edges, unique and unconventional—yet always the gentleman. I'm seeking a younger man, abled, 30 to 50, attractive, slender/trim, who is comfortable with self, respectful, considerate, active, not consumed by material possessions, loyal, honest and sensual/sexual, HIV-neg. and drug-free, and seeking a sincere relationship based on love and trust with an older man. Your photo and 'phone gets mine. *J. D., POB 221, Royse City, TX 75189.*

TEXAS. Clean cut, GWM, 40s, 5'10", 165, able bodied, very interested in meeting new friends. I often find myself attracted to guys with physical disabilities. I travel a great deal (especially So. California and major cities), so location isn't as important as a sharing of mutual interests. I enjoy the performing and fine arts, classical music, architectural history, good food/wine with an interesting guy. My favorite countries to visit are France and Italy, but am open to new experiences. Let's have dinner (please be a non-smoker), explore our interests and perhaps plan an adventure! I look forward to hearing from you soon. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1420,* or **E-mail: Brooks346@aol.com**

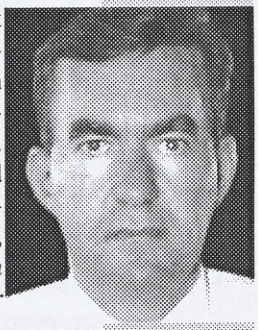
VIRGINIA. I am a 53 year old disabled person, in a wheelchair, but not confined to it, due to diabetic neuropathy. All toes on both feet have been amputated. Had CVA in August—health now improving

since I have become a vegetarian. My interests are Art—I paint; History—ancient to European renaissance; Music—any kind other than Jazz and Hard Rock. I am 6'2", dirty blond/hazel, clean shaven, and my weight fluctuates between 250# and 300#. I like to hug and hold and give excellent full body massages. I am an avid movie buff and love animals. I am looking for a large, hairy, gentle giant type to visit me and look forward to an LTR. I love Europeans and am a confirmed Francophile. Canadian and Swiss also a definite plus, as is lumberjack type. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1543, or ph: 540-342 5859 between 9am and 11pm Eastern time.*

VIRGINIA, ALEXANDRIA. GWM 47, 5' 10" tall, 180#, brown hair and eyes, very hairy body, solid, nondisabled. Wishes to meet amputees for friendship and possibly more. *Michael Allen, POB 19435, Alexandria, VA 22320.*

WASHINGTON. I am 45, Asian, 6'2", 270#, and diabetic. I am looking for a wonderful man, who is as sincere, kind, good hearted and honest as I am. He needs to enjoy communicating, sharing, and cuddling. I want someone who is seeking to grow personally and interpersonally, and is willing to support my growth too. Brains, integrity and character are far more important than looks to me. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1897,* or **E-mail: LUOGUOJIAN1@hotmail.com**

HOMEBASE SEATTLE, WA. I know there is a great guy out there looking for someone he can spend quality time with! I'm truly interested in connecting with someone who is good to himself and those that he holds dear . I am a GWM 42, 175 lbs, 6'2", light brown hair, blue/green eyes and have muscular dystrophy . I have worked in the PC/networking fields for the last 20+ years and now plan to travel throughout North America, Australia and Europe. I am interested in meeting new friends worldwide. I now work as a Webmaster for a traveler resource called **AbleTraveler.com** I am also interested in writing a book that focuses on disabled men: coming out stories, insights, successful relationships, &c. My preference in a mate is someone with a good sense of humor. It doesn't matter to me if you have a disability, small stature, small cock, or if you work or don't work. It's more important ot me that you are happy with your life and what you contribute to the greater good. I use an electric wheelchair to get around. I love travel, theater, dining out or at home, or a concert. Give me a call, I would love to hear from you. *Dan Pierce, MSC 6756, POB 2428, Pensacola, FL 32513-2428, or ph: 206 619 1365 or* **e-mail: abletraveler@abac.com**



WISCONSIN. Gay White Male, 43 years of age. Interests are reading, movies, working out, talking and antiques. I have slight cerebral palsy. Looking for companionship/friendship. I will respond to all. *Replies with correct postage please to A-T #1149.*

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND. Good looking, fit, active wheelchair-user, 28, looking to explore and have physcial fun with other sexy looking wheelchair bound guys, hobbies include cycling, weight-training, countryside, cinema, enjoying life. *14 Abbey Lane, Edinburgh, EH8 8HH, UK* or ph: [UK] - [0]131 468 0490

PERTH, SCOTLAND. My name is Peter, I'm 43, heavy build, brown hair and clean shaven. Disability due to SCI last year. I'm mobile with walking sticks and my car helps too. My interests are varied and include reading, music, films. I'm looking for guys, disabled or able-bodied, for friendship and perhaps, with the right person, possibly more. I look forward to hearing from you. *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1774,* or **email: barking91@hotmail.com**

PARIS, FRANCE. GWM, 37, 6'1", brown hair and eyes, able-bodied Journalist/musician, based in Paris, would love to hear from any disabled guys who would like to correspond or visit in the new century. *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1424.*

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA. Harold, a 49 y.o. Wheelchair user (SCI). 5'6" Well-built. Good-looking, affectionate and sexy. Professional background. I am very independent. Enjoy travelling, scuba diving, movies, dinners out. I drive. Would enjoy corresponding with guys who are disabled/nondisabled who share similar values with a view to friendship. Cheers & I hope to hear from you soon. *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1305,* or **email: harold@connexus.net.au**

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA. Richard, 44 yo architect. I have Spinal Muscular Atrophy (Kugelberg and Welanders Syndrome) and would particularly like to correspond with other guys with this or similar neuro-muscular conditions—though anyone else is also welcome to write. I am still ambulant for most of the time, though becoming increasingly reliant on my wheelchair (manual, ultra light) for shopping and "long-haul" activities. My interests include theatre, opera, classical music (particularly choral—I sing!) and computers. I still socialize a bit on the gay scene here, though I often find access and standing around quite difficult. *Replies with correct international postage please to A-T #1665* or **E-mail: richpond@bigpond.com**

HONDURAS. GWM 45, 160 lbs, 6', short brown hair, brown eyes, clean cut, clean shaven, hard of hearing, lips reading, English or Spanish language, I like travel, reading, art, cooking, homelife, look for permanent couple, friendship, someone to share the rest of my life with. *M.C., POB 1577, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Central America.*

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a newsletter for gay/lesbian stutterers.
For more info, write to:
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The **Center for Disability Rights** in **Rochester, New York** has begun monthly meetings of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered persons with disabilities. The Center is located at **41 Backus Street, Rochester, NY 14608**. The group will get together from **5:00 PM—8:00 PM every third Wednesday of the month**. Call **Bruce Darling** or **Susan Stahl** on **716 647-9257**

ABLE-TOGETHER *Magazine*

is in its **seventh year** of publication. A-T is mailed to subscribers across the globe in January, April, July, and October and is sold at gay/progressive bookstores.

Editor **Bret Throckmorton**, who has a degenerative spinal condition, examines the impact of disability on men's lives and relationships.

A-T Magazine *is* its subscribers—who contribute letters, poems, opinions, artwork, articles and bulletin-board items to the magazine, and help with outreach locally.

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is an email-based mailing-list discussion group... Post messages to the list and get feedback within 24 hours on the topics that interest YOU

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meets ten times a year in a fully accessible Cafe in San Francisco's Castro district...out-of-town visitors especially welcome...BE SEEN HAVING A GOOD TIME WITH OTHER DISABLED/NONDISABLED MEN

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JUST LIKE YOU?
Someone with a disability
JUST LIKE YOURS?
A buddy just to hang out with.
Someone to reflect your reality,
to compare notes with,
share tribulations and successes,
show each other how it's done.
Whether yours is a recent
or not-so-recent injury or disability,
ABLE-TOGETHER
may well be able to show you
THERE'S SOMEONE LIKE YOU.

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